# THE ALLEY CAT'S KITTEN

BY CAROLINE FULLER

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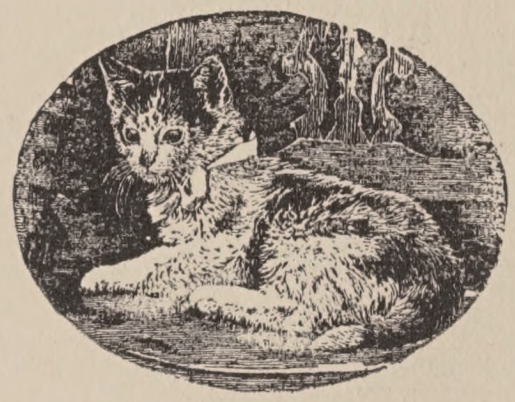
# The Alley Cat's Kitten

By

Caroline Fuller

Author of "Across the Campus," a Story for Girls



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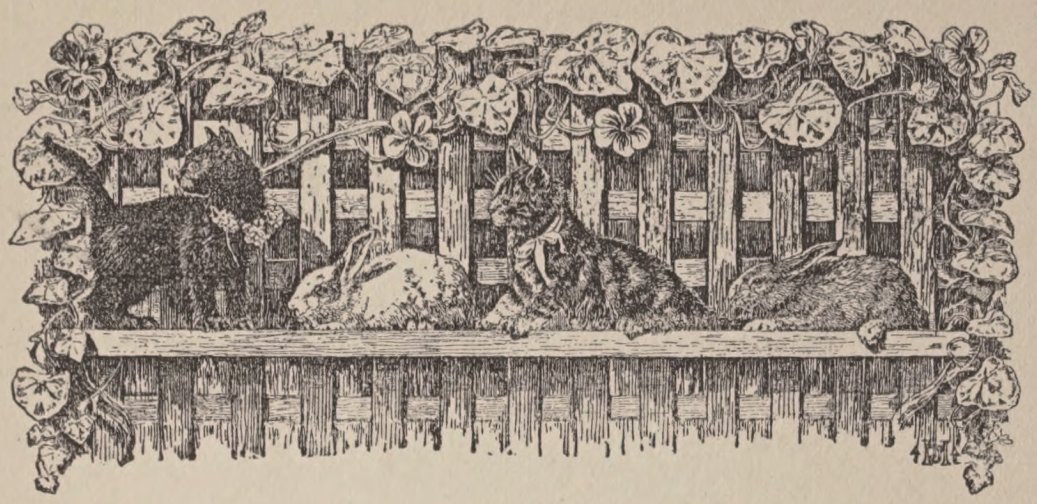
TO HER

WHO HELPED US BUILD THE RABBIT HOUSES,

AND

BEFRIENDED ALLEY CATS



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# The Alley Cat's Kitten

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ALLEY CAT

HE had not really minded being an Alley Cat until the kittens came. But every one who has had children knows that one feels being poor much more keenly on their account, than on one's own. And the strawless corner of a deserted shed did not seem a suitable bed for her mother's grandchildren.

The Alley Cat took no pride in her own appearance. Indeed, it had been said when she was born that her mother, the blooded tortoise-shell of a beautiful home, had never produced such a terrible kitten. She would

not have been allowed to live, if an accident had not deprived her mother of the others. And as she grew up even her own parent saw that she was homely.

It may be thought that homely cats have no feelings; but this is not the case, for homely cats, like plain people, are sensitive, and have even more feelings than others. So one day when some particularly unkind remark had been made about the brindled kitten with yellow sides, she left her home and ran away to become an alley cat.

She was sorry for this afterwards, of course, like every other kitten that runs away. But she would not go home, and slept all summer in empty boxes and under the barns of people who did not like cats. She visited garbage pails, and learned to dash off with the others when the maid opened the kitchen door. She learned to walk on her stomach when crossing the street, and by the time that winter came, she had cobwebs in her whiskers, and looked at everybody out of frightened green eyes.

She was naturally a good mouser, but when the weather grew cold, people shut up their barns, and every cat knows that the open-air mice who live around unused sheds are very poor eating. But she managed to get along until the kittens came, and then she became desperate enough to beg at back doors, and purr for a piece of meat. But some people cannot appreciate even the finest kind of a purr, and the Alley Cat's purr was hoarse and miserable like herself.

"I once had a good soprano," she told the friendly barn cat who brought her a second joint of rat. "But I 'm out of voice now, being up so much daytimes with the kittens."

There were only two kittens, — one ugly like herself, and the other the very image of that beautiful mother who had never loved her. But the Alley Cat remembered this, and made a point of loving the ugly kitten best.

It was soon after their eyes were opened that the coldest weather came, and the Alley

Cat made her first acquaintance with The Back Yard.

She had visited other back yards in her time, but this was very different, because kind children played there, — the children of a mother who loved all helpless things. It is true that she did not particularly yearn after alley cats, and was glad when this one refused to be tamed, and brought into the house.

But she said, "You may put some milk and meat for her out on the coal box, Eunice. She probably knows who she is, even if we don't!"

So very often after that, when the Alley Cat leaped with a crash of snow and icicles to the side fence, she would smell a nice warm luncheon waiting for her on the coal box, and go home with a happy, purring heart.

But just before Christmas, the family went away on a visit and the house was closed, so when the crash of icicles came, and an anxious gray face looked over the fence, there was nothing to be seen or smelled that a body could eat.

The pleasant barn cat who had brought her the second joint of rat, came to tell his friend of a place that he had found down-town behind a restaurant, where many things could be had without asking. He was really a very kind cat, although he had but one hole in his nose, instead of two, owing to the partition having been torn through in a fight.

THE ALLEY CAT

But she could not move her kittens, and indeed had told him very little about them, fearing that he might not like children.

It was soon after this that the gray kitten

died, and the tortoise-shell kitten became so thin that there was scarcely room on her sides for all her beautiful tortoise-shell spots. But it was not until the day before Christmas that the family of kind children came home; and that night, when the mother and grandmother were out in the woodshed unpacking holly wreaths, the Alley Cat came into the yard. The mother of the children noticed her at once, because there had been a heavy snow, and her little dark figure showed quite plainly against it. "Mother, that cat is carrying something. I believe it's a kitten!" she said, and went to the door to look.

The Alley Cat came with her head held high, for it was a heavy kitten, and her poor little back strained under the burden. But she managed to reach the shed, and laid her baby at the feet of Her who loved all helpless things, then turned and went out again into the snow.

"Mother, did you see that? Ah, Mother, look!" She took up the kitten with pitiful

hands, and held it to her cheek. Its little nose was quite white with cold, and snow was on its tail.

"Do you suppose there'd be any danger in keeping it?" she asked. "Eunice wants a kitten dreadfully, and has been praying for one every night for a month."

"Danger? what nonsense! I'll disinfect it," Grandmother said sharply. "Somebody heard that prayer, if the Lord did n't, and the cat's come for Christmas morning."

"It's a perfect beauty, even if it is thin," said the children's mother. "But it's pretty young to keep."

"I kept my babies when they were younger than that, and I'll warrant this cat won't make half so much trouble. Besides, its mother trusted you, so there's nothing else to do."

But it was not until after they had warmed some milk for the kitten, and Grandmother had wrapped her up in a First Aid bichloride bandage, that they remembered how the Alley Cat had gone out again into the night.

"She looked hungry," said the children's mother, with tears in her eyes, "and I know she must have been hungry. But she thought she was n't wanted, and went away. Oh, poor Alley Cat!"

She opened the outside door, and called, "Come back, kitty, come back, poor kitty, kitty! Come back, poor kitty-cat!"

But nothing entered except the wind and the snow. And they never saw the Alley Cat again.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ALLEY CAT'S KITTEN

EUNICE and Kenneth were allowed to get up at six o'clock on Christmas morning, if they would promise not to wake anybody else. But this was a very funny rule, because when they ran into the play-room where the stockings were hung, Mother and Grandmother were always there before them; and Franklin, who had pretended to be fast asleep, would give a wild whoop from behind his door. This happened every time, and for years afterwards the striking of a match would set Eunice's heart beating, and she would think, "Oh, it 's Christmas, and six o'clock has come!" when it might not be Christmas at all, and she would have to shake herself very hard to remember that she was grown-up.

This morning Kenneth was the first to reach the play-room, and so it was he who first saw — but Grandmother grabbed him by the seat of his legged nighty, and put her hand over his mouth, saying, "Wait till Eunice comes!"

It was then that Eunice saw too, and gave a little squeal of delight, — the kind that she always gave when she saw one, although she had never seen one looking out of the top of a stocking before. And this one had a lace ruff around its neck. Otherwise the stocking was just as usual, all bunchy, with a queer, fat foot made by the orange in the toe. But she could not believe that what she saw at the top of the stocking was true.

"Bang!" went Kenneth on one of his new noisy presents that Franklin had given him; and "E-ow!" went the thing in the top of Eunice's stocking. Then it was true after all!

"Do take her out, quick!" said Mrs. Wood, laughing. "I 'm so afraid she 'll stick to the candy elephant underneath."

"There, I 'm glad that 's over!" said Grandmother, with a sigh. "I was n't up with her but seven times last night."

"Are n't you going to look at your other things?" asked Kenneth, blissfully sucking a hind leg of sugar dog.

"Oh, Mother, it has white toes!" Eunice cried.

"Say, Mother, this is bully!" exclaimed Franklin, from the other side of the room where his table was set. Franklin considered himself too old to hang up a stocking now.

"My present for Grandma 's on the breakfast-table," Kenneth explained. "It cost thirteen cents. Eunice's did n't cost but nine."

"And a white end to its tail," said Eunice.

"This book 's better than the one that other fellow had," said Franklin.

"And it spit at me — such a cunning baby spit! Mother, did you hear it spit?"

"Well, I believe that I 'll take another nap," said Grandmother, with a yawn.

"I 'll go back and get dressed," said Mrs. Wood. "Kenny dear, sit off that gum-drop, please. And don't eat but three candy animals before breakfast."

"Eunice did!"

"Never mind what Eunice does. It 's your business to look after Kenny. Yes, Mother, I 'm coming."

And before the children had really looked at all their presents, it was breakfast-time.

"What 'll you name your cat?" asked Franklin over the oatmeal. All Franklin's rabbits had names, and could tell each other apart.

"I don't know yet," said Eunice. "I think I 'll have to wait and see what her yell is."

Eunice had a language of what Franklin called "yells," in which she talked to all animals, and the strange part of it was that the animals seemed to like it. Some of these yells were a kind of song, and others appeared to mean certain things which the animals understood.

Eunice did not call her new Christmas present "Kitty, kitty," but "Wee-je-wee-je, wee-je, kim um sing!" which meant "Come." So in a few days the kitten was known as "Weejums," and Eunice said that Weejums had chosen the name for herself.

"SHE MISSED HER OWN MOTHER"

She was a very lonely little kitten at first, and spit at everybody who tried to feed her. But this was only because she missed her own

mother, and had not yet learned to trust these new friends. She wept nights, and her baby face sometimes had the look of quite an old cat, it was so sad.

"And she never smiled," Eunice said afterwards, "until I learned how to make that same pur-r-ow in my throat that the Alley Cat did." Then she decided that she had made a mistake after all, and that Eunice was her mother.

She learned to come to Eunice's door every morning with a little soft "E-ow?" followed by a very fierce "Wow!" if she was not let in. Sometimes she came so early that Eunice would be sleepy, but there was never any sleep after the kitten was in the room, for she was one of the dreadfully playful kind; whenever Eunice moved her toes, she would spring at them, worrying the bedclothes with wide bites, and soft thudding hind-kicks. And if put down on the floor, she would leap back instantly to dab at Eunice's eyelashes, or tangle herself joyously in her hair, chewing very hard as the curls became caught in her teeth.

She never came to any other door, or spoke to any other member of the family, and seemed to know that she was Eunice's cat.

"IF SHE COULD HAVE SEEN HOW SWEET SHE LOOKED"

But she hated to be dressed in dolls' clothes, and would switch her tail very hard, and sit down "back to," whenever dolls were mentioned. Of course if she could have seen

how sweet she looked with her paws sticking out of a frilled sleeve, and her whiskers showing daintily against the dark blue of a velvet bonnet, she would not have minded at all. But she refused to look in the glass when held up to it, and only slanted back her eyes and ears in a bored way that Eunice called "Chinese dignity."

One day Mrs. Wood was receiving some very elegant people in the parlor, when Weejums came, or rather rolled into the room. She had on a sunbonnet, and a pair of dolls' riding pants, which were so tight that her tail had to be curled around inside like a watch-spring. This gave her a most peculiar gait, as her front legs advanced in stiff hops, and her hind legs went to places that her front legs had not planned at all.

Mrs. Wood's back was towards the door, and she did not see Weejums until the Senator and his wife began to laugh. Then she pounced on the kitten and carried her out, feeling very much mortified, although

she knew that she should laugh herself when the callers were gone.

But Weejums had reason to be glad that she had run into the parlor that day, for it put an end to the most uncomfortable part of the dressing-up. After this, Mrs. Wood forbade Eunice to dress the kitten in any garment that was not built to contain a tail.

But Weejums still took part in all the plays that Eunice thought of, and even went coasting with her on the blue sled. Her tail always swelled before they reached the bottom of the hill, but it went back to its normal size again soon afterwards, and she liked being pulled up the hill on the sled, without having to put her pink toes into the snow.

One Saturday afternoon, the children all went to see "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and came home talking very fast about Topsy and Eva, and the real bloodhounds, "as big as calves," that chased Eliza across the ice.

"There will be scenes from 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' in the nursery to-day, at four," Eunice

announced at breakfast one morning. "It will be the first appearance of Weejums on any stage."

Mrs. Wood said that she would come, and bring some ladies who were to call that afternoon, and Franklin came, and brought some boys who were helping him build the new rabbit-house.

The price of admission was four pins; and Cyclone, the dog, was tied near the door, with a pincushion strapped to his back for a money-box. Cyclone whined and looked miserable whenever a pin approached, for he knew that he had a sign, "PAY HERE," fastened to his collar, and thought it meant that the pins were to be stuck into him.

When everything was ready, Eunice threw open the folding doors between her room and the nursery, and said in a solemn voice, "First Tableau. 'Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven!'"

The tableau was Kenneth, standing in a high chair, buttoned into one of his mother's

corset covers, which reached nearly to his feet. The grown-up audience was wondering what this had to do with "Uncle Tom's Cabin," when Franklin said, "Oh, pshaw! that's wrong. That part does n't come in yet."

"It does *so*," said Eunice, putting her head out from behind the door.

"Does *so*," echoed Kenneth from the high chair.

"Aw, you must n't talk," jeered Franklin. "You're nothing but the nightmare Uncle Tom saw in the last act."

"Ain't either!" said Kenneth, bursting a button off the heavenly robe, in his wrath. "I 'm little Eva."

"It's no fair talking," said Eunice. "Mother, is it fair talking to the tableaux?"

"Let's have the next scene," said one of the ladies, applauding very hard.

"Oh, yes," said Eunice, looking quite pleased. "The next scene is Eliza crossing on the ice, pursued by the fierce bloodhound."

Eunice was Eliza, and Weejums was the

bloodhound, and the cakes of ice were newspapers spread on the floor. Eunice, screaming loudly, clasped her doll to her bosom and jumped from paper to paper, then stopped and wiggled a string, and the fierce bloodhound followed, with gentle pounces and wavings of a tortoise-shell tail.

But when the audience clapped its delight, the tail grew so big with terror that you could scarcely see any kitten at all behind it, and dashed off the stage to hide under the nursery bureau. And the whole audience left their seats and crawled around on hands and knees with the actors, trying to coax the fierce bloodhound out.

But he would n't come, and so they could not have any more scenes from "Uncle Tom's Cabin," as Weejums was to have taken the part of Miss Ophelia and any number of others. So the last tableau was announced as "A Sorrowful Widow Weeping over her Husband's Grave."

Eunice was the widow, with a red tablecloth over her head, which was the nearest she could

find to anything black, and Kenneth was the grave, down on all fours, covered with a yellow lamb's-wool rug. He was dreadfully warm and uncomfortable in this position, but behaved very well, until Franklin gave a kind of snort and said, "Ho, who ever saw a grave with panties on!"

Then the grave turned a complete somersault, and lay there chuckling wickedly, while the sorrowful widow took off her red tablecloth and scolded him.

The audience went away then, and Eunice found that Cyclone had slipped the pincushion around under his stomach, and chewed all the bran out. And when Weejums came out from under the bureau, she had to squeeze herself so flat that she howled all the way, and some black, yellow, and white hairs were left behind. But this was because she was getting to be a big kitten now, and could no longer have gone into a Christmas stocking.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE BLACK RABBIT WITH WHITE SPOTS, AND THE WHITE RABBIT WITH BLACK SPOTS

THE children went East with their mother that summer, and Weejums stayed with Grandmother and Cyclone at the farm. But Eunice wrote to her quite often, and learned from her replies that she was having a splendid time chasing grasshoppers.

"I 'd enclose one tender little one for you," Weejums wrote; "but your grandmother says that they would n't agree with you. It seems a pity, because they have such juicy little red legs."

Eunice did not really believe that Weejums wrote these letters herself, but was quite certain that she thought all these things, even if she never mentioned them.

When they came back in the fall, Grand-

mother went down first to open the house, and, of course, Eunice asked for Weejums almost before she was inside the door.

"Well, she 's busy just now," said Grandmother, with a funny look; "but she sent word for you to look behind the barrel in the woodshed."

Eunice and Kenneth ran as fast as they could, wondering why Weejums did not come to meet them. And then they heard a purr — such a loud, proud purr! Eunice thought that they heard it in the dining-room; but Kenneth said it was not until they reached the kitchen. But it was Weejums' purr, and it came from behind the barrel in the woodshed!

Eunice looked at Weejums, and Weejums looked at Eunice, and Mother and Grandmother came out and looked at them both. Then Eunice took three little squealing rolls of fur into her lap, and kissed three tiny pink noses, warm and moist with sleep. And Weejums forgot all about her kittens, in the joy of seeing Eunice again.

"They were born at the farm, two weeks ago," Grandmother said, "and came down in a basket last night."

"Don't you think," asked Eunice, in an awe-struck tone, "that she's very young to be a mother?"

"It really looks so," said Grandmother, seriously; "because she seems to love you a great deal better than she does the kittens!"

Weejums was rolling over and over in her delight, and jumping in and out of the box to rub against Eunice's face. And whenever she jumped, her purr jolted up into a funny little squeak that came down when she did.

"One is black with white edgings," said Eunice, in a rapturous whisper, "and one is yellow and white, with mittens."

"Yes, those are extra toes like a thumb," said Grandmother. "There's a cat up at the farm with toes like that."

"And one is tortoise-shell like — no, not like Weejums. Isn't it a funny color, Mamma?"

"Yes, if she was ever planned for a tortoise-shell, her colors must have run."

Eunice looked alarmed, and wondered if all the other kittens' colors would run together, like the dyes of Easter eggs when they come out wrong. But there was really nothing strange about this kitten, except that where her black spots should have been black, to make her a regular tortoise-shell, they were a kind of mixed brindle and maltese, with speckled and drab lights. The rest of her was a nice yellow and white, as it should be.

"She looks like my old laundry-bag," said Grandmother; "but I kept her for the sake of that alley cat."

"Oh, say, come out and see the rabbits try the new house!" called Franklin at the shed-door, and everybody but Grandmother hurried out into the yard; for the rabbits had just come home from "Beansy's," where they had spent the summer, and were to begin house-keeping in their new quarters.

Mrs. Wood was particularly interested in

the big rabbit-house, because she had helped draw plans for the billiard and drawing rooms, and herself suggested that there should be an upstairs.

There were two rabbits, a black one with white spots, and a white one with black spots, and they were called Mercurius Dulcis and the Overture to Zampa. Franklin had found the first name on one of his mother's medicine-bottles, and admired it; but Mrs. Bun was always called Dulcie for short. The Overture was a fine, big fellow with muscular sides, and a louder stamp of the hind leg than any other rabbit in the Rabbit Club. Indeed, Franklin had been made president of the Rabbit Club, just because of the size and strength and sound of the Overture's feet. Even Beansy's white buck, Alonzo, was nothing beside him.

"You put Stamper in the front door," Franklin said to Beansy, for Stamper was the Overture's club name, "and I'll put Dulcie in the cupola. Then he'll have to go up, and she'll have to come down."

The cupola had a top that came off, something like the cover of a baking-powder tin, and Dulcie was thrust in, with a terrific kicking and scrambling of resentful hind legs. But she was no fun at all afterwards, for she sat perfectly still in a frightened bunch, with her nose wiggling very fast, and did not try to move.

"Stamper's all right, though," Beansy said, with his face against the wire-netting. "He's going upstairs."

He certainly was, although at first he had proceeded cautiously around the drawing-room, with long backward stretches of the hind legs. But now he found the staircase, — made of a board with little slats nailed across it, — and scratched his way up very slowly, smelling the air with little tosses of the head.

"He'll find the celery now," called Eunice, delightedly. "I put a piece in Dulcie's boudoir."

Stamper ate the celery loudly, beginning with the leafy end, and Dulcie heard him from the cupola.

"She's coming down!" Kenneth exclaimed.

"No, she's stuck," said Beansy. "Your old cupola door ain't big enough for her to get out at."

"Ho!" answered Franklin, with scorn, "you just see!" And in a minute Dulcie had squeezed her way through, and dropped down suddenly on Stamper's head, which surprised him so much that he dropped the last bit of celery,—the widest end,—and Dulcie ate it. Then they sat looking at each other with wiggling noses, as if they had never met before, and each one was thinking, "Now who on earth can this other rabbit be!"

"They're all right now," said Mrs. Wood, turning back to the house; "but they'll never be able to get into that cupola after they've had their dinner."

Kenneth ran after his mother, Beansy went home, and Franklin went into the shed to get his tool-chest.

"Let me hold Stamper while you fix the door," Eunice begged, for being Franklin's

sister, she naturally regarded Stamper in the light of a nephew.

"No, sir, he'll stay below decks," said Franklin, taking the cupola off the house.

"But he's trying to get out, Franklin. I can see his ears coming upstairs."

Franklin ruled out a larger door in the cupola with his square, and began to saw.

"Franklin, he *is* coming out!"

"Oh, go play with your cats!" said Franklin, impatiently. But Eunice had seen a pair of wicked ears, erect as corn-stalks, peering through the opening where the cupola had been.

"He will get out!" she thought, and grasping his ears firmly, hauled the big fellow into her arms.

Stamper sat very still, as he was fond of Eunice, and simply moved his wide ears back and forth until Franklin began to pound. Then he gave a mighty leap, kicked Eunice in the stomach, and sprang to the ground.

"Franklin!" Eunice gasped; she was too

much out of breath to say anything else; and Franklin only answered, "Oh, don't bother!"

So before Eunice could make him look around, Stamper had given three loud, slow thumps with his legs, a kind of double-back-action kick in the air, and was off across the yard.

"Head him off! head him off!" called Franklin, as he saw the scudding of a white tail. "Round by the alley, quick, quick!"

Eunice ran as fast as she could, but before they could stop him, the rabbit had dodged under a barn and disappeared.

"Oh, thunder!" said Franklin, "we can't ever catch him now. How in the world did he get out?"

Eunice went through a little struggle with herself, and then said: "He — I was holding him just a minute, Franklin. You see he was most out himself, and so —"

"You didn't try to hold him after what I said!"

"Yes, I did."

Franklin might have understood how hard it was for her to tell this, but he did n't, and said angrily, "Eunice, you 're a naughty, naughty girl, and you shall never even touch one of my rabbits again!"

Eunice turned and went into the house without saying a word, but Franklin heard a pitiful wail when the door was closed, and thought, "Hm — serves her right!"

He spent the rest of the morning looking for Stamper, and putting LOST signs, with a description of the rabbit, on all the barns in the neighborhood. But he did not expect to find him again, and dinner that day was not a cheerful meal. Eunice's eyes were red; Kenneth was too awestruck to upset his glass of water as usual; and Mrs. Wood looked grieved. But Franklin did not see why she should expect him to be anything but cross, when he had lost the finest rabbit in the whole club, and all through the fault of a meddling child, — her child too! He decided that he had a right to be most severe, and went out after dinner to whittle on

the side steps, which with him was always a sign of great displeasure.

As he sat there, Weejums picked her way daintily down beside him, and came out for her daily airing. She gave a funny little jump and spit, when one of the whittlings struck her, and Franklin almost laughed, but remembered in time that he was too angry, and sent another whittling after her to see what she would do. This time she smelled of it, to see if it was something to eat, then finding that Franklin was only joking, slanted back her ears, and walked haughtily across the yard, with stiff jerks of the tail.

The temptation to make her jump proved too much for him, and he shied a small piece of coal at her so neatly that it passed directly under her, tossing the sand about her feet. Weejums gave a wild spit, and tore into the alley, with rising fur, looking around in vain for the earthquake that had struck her.

"Come back, Weej— here, here," called Franklin, good-naturedly, for teasing animals

was not usually in his line. But then he was cross to-day, and had not Eunice lost his rabbit?

He put down his knife, and went out into the alley to bring Weejums back, but at that moment something terrible happened. A baker's cart, followed by a fierce dog, jingled into the alley, and the dog made a dash at Weejums. Franklin ran for the dog, and Cyclone, who happened to come around the house just then, ran after Franklin. Poor Weejums could not see that the second dog was a friend, and did not recognize Franklin in the boy who was chasing her. She left the alley and dashed across the street into a vacant lot, where three other dogs were nosing around among tin cans. They gave a yelp of delight, and joined in the pursuit, followed by several small boys, who rushed along after Franklin, shouting, "Ei-er there! Sick her, sick her!"

In a few minutes every boy and dog in the neighborhood was on Weejums' trail, and Franklin could not stop long enough to ex-

plain to them that he himself was not chasing her. The hunt came to an end, when she vanished under some tumble-down sheds, many blocks away from home, where a friendly barn cat, with a torn nose, hid her behind a soap-box.

"Don't mention it," he said, when Weejums tried to thank him. "I once had a friend with eyes like yours." And he sighed. But of course Weejums could not know that this friend had been her own dear mother.

"Just watch me do stunts with that dog," the barn cat said. He was naturally inelegant in his language, never having lived in refined surroundings; but Weejums forgot this when she saw him leap to the back of a certain yellow cur, and claw maps on his skin, like the true knight that he was.

All the other dogs, including Cyclone, turned tail and fled, and the barn cat strolled back, with that gentle expression on his face, which it is said that great warriors usually wear.

"They did n't see where you went in," he

said, comfortingly; "the boys are looking under the wrong shed."

"I can never thank you for your kindness," said Weejums, with a little break in her yow. "But I shall tell my mistress about you, and I hope you will call."

"Does your family keep a desirable garbage pail?" asked the barn cat, thoughtfully.

"Unexcelled. But of course I eat in the kitchen."

"Ah!" said the barn cat, with another sigh, "what it means to have a home! Now I presume that they never throw hot dishwater at you."

"Never," said Weejums, in horror; "I am treated as one of the family."

"Alas," said the barn cat sadly, thinking of his own life.

"But I've run away so far that I don't know how to get back, and fear that I shall never see my dear little kittens again." And Weejums began to weep.

"Their age?" asked the barn cat, briefly.

"Two weeks."

"Most unfortunate. I must try and find your home for you. Remain here in the soap-box until I return, and if any strange cat molests you, say but the two words, 'Torn-nose,' and he will disappear."

Weejums promised, and the barn cat slipped out so quietly that she scarcely saw him go. But all the boys and dogs were gone now, so she did not mind being left alone.

"HE WAS NATURALLY INELEGANT IN HIS LANGUAGE"

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A CALICO CAT

RANKLIN did not go home after Weejums disappeared, but wandered around the neighborhood, wondering what he should do if she did not come back.

"What do you mean by chasing my sister's cat?" he asked fiercely of one of the small boys who followed him.

"Aw — go long! You was chasin' it yourself. Tie up your teeth!" was the insulting reply. And Franklin realized that he could never make them believe anything else. Then he began to wonder if there was not a certain amount of truth in what the boy had said. To be sure, he had started out to rescue Weejums and bring her home, but there had been a strange and terrible joy in his heart, when that

seventeenth dog joined the hunt, and fell over all the others.

"Pshaw! all cats come home," he thought. "She'll find her way back all right. But rabbits are different."

He ground his heel angrily into the gravel, and thought of Stamper; but somehow he could not work himself up into as bad a temper as he had before. He could not imagine what would become of Eunice if Weejums were lost.

"But cats always come home," he thought again. "P'r'aps she'll be there when I get back."

He had not noticed in what direction he was walking, and suddenly found himself quite far down-town, opposite the bird store. There was a new assortment of very wobbly fox terrier puppies in the window, and he could not resist sauntering up to examine them. But almost immediately he wheeled around, and walked off very fast without looking back, for in the bird store he had seen his mother and Eunice.

They were buying a rabbit. He had seen the man holding up one of the old store rabbits, who was kicking dreadfully, and whacking the white-mouse cage with his hind legs.

Franklin knew that they charged a dollar and a quarter for this rabbit, and that he was not worth it.

"If they're going to buy a rabbit, they ought n't to buy one here," he thought, in an agony of anxiety. "There is n't a rabbit here that I 'd put in my house.

"If that bird-store man does Mother on that rabbit, I 'll go down and settle him to-morrow," he added to himself. And then he remembered, with shame, that he could never accept a rabbit from Eunice, after he had chased her cat.

He took a car home and looked eagerly on the front porch, half expecting that Weejums would be sitting there waiting for him with a forgiving smile. But she did not appear, and he went all around the alley again, calling her

in beseeching tones. Suddenly, under the corner of a neighbor's shed, he saw something white move, and went into the house to get a saucer of milk.

"I s'pose she'll be afraid to come to me now," he thought, and the thought hurt, for Franklin was not a cruel boy.

He set the milk down, very carefully, near the place where he had seen the white thing move, and presently it hopped out, with a great flop of the ears, and began to drink. But it was a white thing with black spots, and its name was Stamper.

Rabbits love milk as well as cats do, so it was easy for Franklin to grab the runaway by his long ears, and bear him off to his box, with a milky nose and an indignant heart. Then he rushed into the house to see if his mother and sister had come home. But they were not there, and Franklin feared that they might have gone to some strange and distant place in search of a rabbit. He was much relieved when a car stopped, and Mrs. Wood and

Eunice got off; for they were not carrying anything but some bundles from the dry-goods store, and five cents' worth of candy for Kenneth. There was no sign whatever of any rabbit being concealed about them.

"Stamper's come home," he said, almost before they reached the steps.

"I thought you told Eunice there was no chance of his ever coming back," said Mrs. Wood, kissing Kenneth, who had run to meet them.

"Well, I didn't think there was," said Franklin, shamefacedly. "Eunice didn't need to cry."

He suspected that his mother had very little admiration for boys who made Eunice cry.

"There wasn't one chance in a thousand," he added, "and I wouldn't have caught him then, if I hadn't had the milk."

"What were you doing with milk?" asked Eunice, suspiciously.

Franklin did not answer, and looked so uncomfortable that Mrs. Wood changed the

subject; for she made a point of never asking one of her children embarrassing questions before the others, and this was one reason why they loved her so much.

After supper there came a loud thump at the side door, and Franklin, who was studying in the parlor, heard a delighted shout from Kenneth. Then Eunice came running in with a smile, and taking Franklin by the hand, said, "I 've got something for you, to make up for your feeling so bad about Stamper."

"But Stamper 's come home," he said, giving her a rough little hug. "And I can't take any present from you now, Sis, so run away, and let me get my algebra."

"I told her I thought you would n't care to," said Mrs. Wood, looking relieved. "But she said that she 'd feel very badly if you did n't take them." She was so glad that Franklin felt he did not deserve them, although of course she could not know yet just how much he did n't. "They" were on the dining-room table, sitting in Eunice's hat, — the most beau-

tiful little pair of maltese rabbits that Franklin had ever seen. And all his life long he had wanted a maltese rabbit!

"Those didn't come from the bird store, I know," he burst out in delight, quite forgetting that he was not to keep them.

"They came from the farm of the father of a boy who works at Taylor's," said Mrs. Wood, laughing. "The bird-store rabbits were no good."

"Oh, those bird-store rabbits are enough to give a hand-organ sore throat! You're just a brick, Mother, and so is Eunice, but I can't take these little fellows, really. Eunice must keep them herself."

"Eunice will feel badly if you don't take them," said Mrs. Wood again.

"Oh, but there's reasons why I can't," said Franklin, desperately. "I don't want to tell before the kids."

"Well, they can be my rabbits for to-night, then," said Mrs. Wood, in her quiet way, "and to-morrow we'll decide whom they really be-

long to. I shall feel dreadfully proud to own some rabbits, even if I can't have them but one night."

She smiled, and Eunice and Kenneth began to laugh, thinking the whole affair a joke.

"But they're too little to put with Dulcie and Stamper, aren't they, Mother?" Eunice said. "We'll have to put them with Weejums and the kittens."

"Oh, she'll eat 'em up!" said Kenneth.

"No, she won't," said Mrs. Wood. "We'll watch her and see. They are not so different from her own babies."

But when they took the little bunnies to Weejums' box, there was no Weejums to receive them, and the three kittens were crying with hunger.

"I'll go call her," said Eunice, running to the side door. But no distant "purr-eow" answered to her call, and no tortoise-shell tail waved a greeting from the top of fence or shed.

"Biddy, have you seen Weejums?" she asked, coming into the kitchen.

"Shure, I have, and a very foine cat she is, barrin' her swate voice."

"No, but have you seen her since dinner? Biddy, please don't tease."

"Well, I gave her some dinner at two, and she left my prisence directly afterwards, without so much as sayin' 'thank you,' and wint for a sthroll."

"Then she has n't come home! Oh, Mother, do you suppose anything's happened to her?"

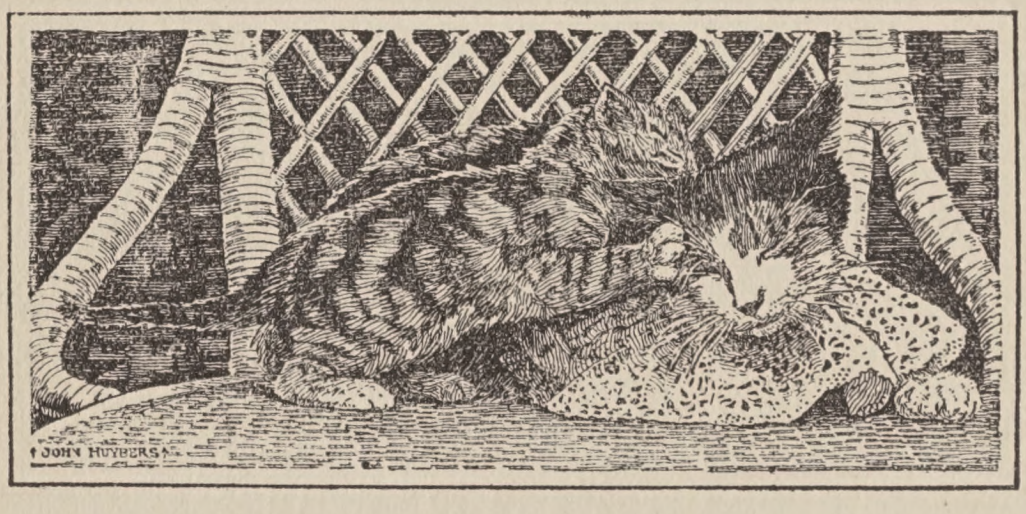
Mrs. Wood went back to the parlor to ask Franklin if he had seen anything of Weejums, and Franklin told her the whole miserable story, or nearly the whole; for of course the children came running in to interrupt.

"Don't tell Eunice," his mother said quickly. "It would make it so much harder if she thought you had anything to do with it."

So Franklin did not tell, but he never liked to think afterwards of those days that followed. Eunice went around with a white face; while Kenneth tore his clothes to shreds crawling

about under barns and fences. The loss of Stamper had been sad, of course, for rabbits are both desirable and attractive, but Weejums was one of the family.

The kittens had to be fed with a spoon, and gave furious strangled howls, as the milk was poured into them.




"A LITTLE GIRL'S YOUNG MOTHER CAT"

Eunice wrote out an advertisement to be put in the paper:

"LOST. — A little girl's tortoise-shell, young-mother cat, with pink toes and a sweet face. Answering to the name of Wee-je, Wee-je, kim-um-sing."

And Mrs. Wood put it all in, except the last, about answering, saying instead that there would be a reward of two dollars for any one returning the cat to her home.

This notice appeared for three days, and on the third, another one followed it:

"In addition to above reward offered for return of young mother cat, will be given: Two fine, fat, handsome rabbits in splendid condition, with one palatial, airy rabbit-house, eight rooms, staircases, cupola, and all modern improvements.

"F. Wood, Esq."

Mrs. Wood smiled as she read this, although her lips trembled, and she thought: "That must have broken Franklin's heart."

The next day something else left the family, and this was no less than Kenneth's beautiful head of curls; but something much more important returned in their place, when he came marching home without them.

Grandmother was there for a few days, and took him down to have them cut, because he

had been promised that they should go before school began. Then she dressed him in his first trousers, and brought him triumphantly to his mother, who, instead of being delighted, said, "Oh, Kenny, Mother's lost her little baby!" and looked so grieved that he broke into a great roar of sympathy, and a little later, when he strolled out into the street, a boy called after him: "H'm, been cryin' 'cause your hair's cut!"

"Say that again, will you!" said Kenneth, removing his hands from the new pockets.

"I said you've been cryin' 'cause —"

But the sentence was never finished, for Kenneth had flown at him with all the confidence those trousers inspired, — it is wonderful to find how much more easily you can run in them, — and the boy dropped down behind a fence.

"I guess I'll take a walk," Kenneth thought, with becoming modesty. "I guess I'll just take a walk around the block."

"Round the block" was the extent of the

distance he was allowed to go away from home by himself.

"I may meet some boys," he added, trying not to keep looking down at his legs.

But he did not meet any boys, because they had all run to join a crowd that was gathering on another street. And Kenneth ran too, although he knew that it was much further than around the block; but his new trousers went as fast as they could, and so naturally he had to go with them.

The boys were looking up at a tree, and throwing things, and Kenneth caught his breath, as he heard a most un-bird-like "*E-ow*" from among the branches.

"Say, what color'd cat is it?" he asked of a ragamuffin, who was preparing to throw an ancient apple.

"Caliker cat," said the boy. "Up there. See?" and he closed one eye to take aim.

"She ain't calico. She's tortoise-shell," burst out Kenneth, turning red with delight.

"She's our Weejums, and I'm goin' to take her home."

"Oh, she's your cat, is she?" asked the boy, dropping his apple and looking dangerous. "Your cat? — when we chased it up there? Well, I like that! Say, fellers, did you hear that? Your cat, is it? Huh, *your* cat! Calico cat! Tie up your teeth!"

"Don't have to," Kenneth replied.

"Say, you better run home to your Ma-Ma, little boy. D'ye hear?"

"Don't have to," Kenneth responded.

"Calico cat!" sneered the boy, insultingly. "Calico, I say. Old calico cat!"

"Tortoise-shell," insisted Kenneth, politely but firmly. "I'll punch your head."

The boy doubled up his fists with a snort of rage, — he was bigger than Kenneth, — and said:

"Oh, you'll punch my head, will you? You'll punch my head! I say, fellers, did you hear him say he'd punch my head? Boxey, you heard him say it?"

"I heard him," said Boxey.

"Well, then, come along and do it. I just stump you to come along and do it. Huh! don't *dare* do it!"

Kenneth had never engaged in a regular fight before, but it is strange how different trousers make one feel — especially that first day. So he took off his new little coat, — it was quite an old one before he reached home, — and went for the boy. A ring formed to see that there was fair play; for although they all pitied Kenneth, they could n't help respecting a boy who said, "Don't haff ter," to Patsy McGann.

Everybody knows that there are two kinds of strength in a fight, — one that comes from training, and one from splendid rage, and Kenneth's was of the latter order. When his nose began to bleed, he wept with fury, which was very effective, as it made the blood seem ever so much more. And when Patsy muttered, "Calico," between his blows, Kenneth answered, "Tortoise-shell!" with all the vengeance of which he was capable.

It was not a long battle, for the sound of Weejums' pathetic voice, from the tree, put force into Kenneth's rib-punches, and presently Patsy McGann went down, with a waving of grimy heels that called forth a storm of applause from the onlookers.

" He 's licked him — he's licked him ! Give him the cat," called a larger boy who had strolled up while the fight was in progress. And all the others drew away from the tree, while Kenneth coaxed Weejums down, with a voice that she recognized, although she would never have known his poor bruised little face. And just as he had taken her in his arms, who should come whistling up the street but Franklin !

He understood the situation at a glance, and striding up to Patsy McGann, seized him by the shoulder, saying, " Did you lick him ? Answer me ! Did you lick that little fellar ? "

" Naw, he licked me. An' just on account of that old caliker cat you was chasin' the other day."

"You shut up!" said Franklin, with his face burning. But Kenneth had not heard the whole of the sentence.

"What kind of a cat did you say it was?" he asked, turning to Patsy.

"A cal—I mean turtle-shell cat," said Patsy, sullenly, walking off with his friends.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MR. AND MRS. BLUEBERRY

FRANKLIN took Kenneth in at the back door, and washed his face, before letting any one see him. Then they walked triumphantly into the parlor, with Weejums on Kenneth's shoulder.

Eunice was practising at the piano, with Mrs. Wood beside her, so they did not see Weejums, until Eunice felt a little purring face against her own, and screamed for joy. Mrs. Wood exclaimed also, and turned very pale, but it was not on account of Weejums.

"Was it a runaway, Franklin?" she asked quietly, "or did he get under a street car?"

Just then Grandmother came into the room, and Franklin led Kenneth up to her with pride.

"Grandmother, look at your descendant!"

he said. "He ain't but six, and he licked a boy eight."

"Hurrah for you!" said Grandmother, which any one will admit was a very strange remark for a grandmother to make.

"What was the fight about?" asked Mrs. Wood, bringing some Pond's Extract from the dining-room. "Franklin, you did n't get him into this?"

"Course he did n't," said Kenneth. "'Twas Weejums got me in, and Patsy McGann. Ouch, Mother! don't pour it in my eye."

"It was an entirely necessary fight," Franklin explained. "Patsy McGann was throwing things at Weejums, and calling her a calico cat."

"And she 's tortoise-shell," Kenneth said.

"Well, they happen to be the same thing," said Mrs. Wood, patiently. "Mother, do you think it 's so very desirable for a boy to come home looking like this?"

"I 'd like to get a glimpse of the other boy," said Grandmother, with a wicked twinkle in her

eye. Franklin gave a whoop of delight, but Grandmother cut short his joy by beckoning him into the other room.

"You said he licked a boy eight?" she asked, taking up her work.

"Yes, and, oh, Grandmother —"

"Nothing strange about that, since he's a Wood. *You* whipped a boy eight when you were six, didn't you? Seems to me I remember."

"You bet!" said Franklin, with a joyous flush of recollection.

"Yes, and so did your father. But now you're twelve, and I know a boy your own age you can't whip."

"Well, I'd just like to have you bring him out," said Franklin, doubling up his fists.

"It's yourself," said Grandmother. "It seems a pity that you're not strong enough to whip yourself, — when you want to chase cats, and things like that."

"Oh," said Franklin, looking crestfallen.

"Now go and get ready for supper," Grand-

mother said quietly. "I 've had my say." Franklin edged to the door, and then came back, holding out his hand.

"Grandmother," he burst out, "Grandmother, shake! You 're a gentleman!" after which he bolted upstairs.

"Where was Weejums going when the boys chased her up a tree?" Eunice asked at the supper-table.

"Don't know," said Kenneth. "Mother, can't I have three helps of cherries to-night, 'cause I 've got a sore nose?"

"You may have four more cherries, Kenny; but don't throw the stones at Cyclone any more. He may swallow them."

"S'cuse me," said Franklin, pushing back his chair. "Come on, Eunice, and we 'll go ask the boys about Weejums." It was a treat for Eunice to go out with Franklin, after supper, and they were lucky enough to find the boy, Boxey, at the end of the block.

"There was two cats," Boxey said, eagerly, "Yours, and an old tomcat with a game nose.

They was trottin' along together, an' when we come up, he went under a porch, and she run up a tree. He kep' callin' to her, and spittin' at us, the whole time."

"P'r'aps he was bringing her home," Eunice said. "Oh, Franklin, let's go find that poor tomcat, and put some vaseline on his nose."

"It was a lattice-work place, under a porch," said Boxey, starting ahead. "I'll show you."

"Oh, it isn't likely he's there now," said Franklin, taking Eunice's hand; "and if he's a friend of Weejums, he'll turn up again, Sis, so don't you worry. We'll go home and put some stuff out in the back yard for him to eat."

That evening, Mrs. Wood sat laying some lovely, sunshiny things away in a little box, and thinking of how like the face of a dandelion Ken's dear head used to look.

"Mother's lost her little baby!" she said to herself, as she slipped the last one from her finger, and kissed it softly before closing the box.

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" said Grandmother, who was pretending to read the paper. "You've got something better."

But Mrs. Wood knew that Grandmother had just such another box put away somewhere, — the box that held the curls of him who had been Kenneth's father, and Grandmother's little boy.

"I'm going to give Kenny my rabbits," said Franklin, the next morning. "'T was in the advertisement, and I promised."

"Oh, but Kenny didn't see the advertisement," Mrs. Wood said; "and Weejums is going to buy him such a nice present this morning. I wouldn't give away the rabbits, Franklin dear."

"Well, but I promised, Mother."

"Yes, but Kenny is such a little boy, he could never begin to take care of all Dulcie's young families. Suppose that you give the new little bunnies to the children, if you want to give away something. I don't believe Kenny himself would want you to part with the rabbits that you've had so long."

"Well, I'll think about it," Franklin replied. And that afternoon it was announced that Eunice and Kenneth were to have a bunny apiece.

Two wild shrieks of delight were followed by a dash to Weejums' box, where the strange-eared visitors lay, cuddled in amongst the kittens.

"I want the one that's mostly maltese," said Eunice.

"No, *I* want the one that's mostly maltese," said Kenneth.

"You never thought of it till I spoke."

"Did *so*. Pig!"

Eunice promptly seized him by the hair, and Mrs. Wood went to the rescue, saying, "Sister, for shame! *Kenny!* you must n't kick Eunice, — and now that you're in trousers too!"

"I can kick ever so much better," Kenneth said.

"I put them on last night and kicked him," Eunice explained. "I know you can."

"Well, you are both very naughty, and I

don't think any rabbits will be given away to-day. I 'll go explain to Franklin," and Mrs. Wood started to leave the room.

But both children rushed after her, calling: "Oh, Mother, I 'll take the other Bun! I will, Mother!"

"No, Mother, *I 'll* take the other Bun. I like him. Please, Mother!"

"I think that Kenneth should have first choice," Mrs Wood said patiently; "because he brought Weejums home. So the mostly maltese Bun can belong to him. But if I hear another word of quarrelling about it, the rabbits will go back to the farm to-morrow."

There was a moment of awed silence, and then Eunice said, with a sudden radiant smile: "I shall call mine Mr. Samuel Blueberry!"

"Mine will be just Bunny Grey," Kenneth remarked. "Blueberries give me the stomach-ache."

"Mother, can't we have a wedding like Cousin Florence's, and let the little bunnies get married? I 'll do it all myself."

"Don't you think they're rather young yet?" asked Mrs. Wood, — "only six weeks."

"No, but I heard Auntie say it's better to be married young, because it gets you more used to yourself."

"How many children would you want to invite?" asked Mrs. Wood, seriously.

"Oh, just Mary and Wyman, and their animals. And Bertha and Annabel, and Gerald and Myrtie Foster."

Mary and Wyman Bates were the children's cousins who lived uptown. Bertha and Annabel were Kindergarten friends of long standing, and the Foster children were school companions, whose father kept a fascinating grocery store. Many were the striped jaw-breakers, and flat "lickrish" babies, which Myrtie had brought to her friend; while Kenneth could not help admiring a boy who had a regular house, built of tin cans, in which he kept potato bugs.

"I suppose you will want them all to stay to supper," Mrs. Wood said; "and you know

our dining-room is small. Suppose that you don't ask Gerald and Myrtie."

"Oh, Mother!" Eunice exclaimed.

And Kenneth echoed, "Oh, Mother!"

"I could ask them just for the ceremony," Eunice said. "Lots of people are asked to the ceremony, who don't come to the reception."

"You'll find that they'll expect to stay, if they come. But of course you can do as you like. Perhaps they won't mind being crowded."

The invitations were written and sent that night.

"Mr. and Mrs. Overture-to-Zampa Wood request the honor of your presence, at the marriage of their daughter, Miss Bunny Grey, to Mr. Samuel Blueberry, Esquire, on Wednesday, September the 8th, at three o'clock in the afternoon."

And they were directed to Miss Mary Bates and Kitten; Master Wyman Bates and Rabbits; Miss Myrtie Foster and Kitten, etc., and all were accepted with pleasure.

Eunice spent delightful hours in getting up the wedding garments, — little white satin blankets cut like dog blankets, except with not so much "yoke," as rabbits' heads are screwed

"MR. AND MRS. BLUEBERRY"

so close to their bodies. Samuel's dress-suit was trimmed with pink baby-ribbon, laid on plain, and the bride's robe with lace; and she wore a white veil, with orange blossoms, which made her look a lighter shade of maltese than she really was.

The effect was most beautiful until the groom tried to eat some of the orange blossoms, and they had to be pried out of his mouth with a match, and sewed on again. This delayed the final dressing a little; but when the guests arrived, the bride and groom were — contrary to custom — awaiting them on the hall table.

Bertha Richmond's cat was named "Grandmother," and wore a nice kerchief and frilled cap, with paper spectacles fastened to the border. Her presents were a bunch of young turnips, carefully washed and tied with white ribbon, for the bride, and the same effect in red beets for the groom.

Annabel Loring's cat wore a new blanket of pale-blue cashmere, trimmed with swan's-down, and brought two bouquets of red and white clover, done up in tin foil.

Mary and Wyman Bates had started out with lettuce and carrots for their present, but had been obliged to give most of it to their own rabbits on the way down, to keep them still.

They had had an exciting trip on the street car, for Mary brought also her two kittens, one attired in a riding habit, and the other in a Mother Hubbard wrapper and straw hat.

Myrtie Foster had not been able to bring

"IN A MOTHER HUBBARD WRAPPER AND A STRAW HAT"

her cat all the way, but arrived with a torn apron and scratched thumb, which Mrs. Wood tenderly bound up, to save Myrtie the trouble of sucking it.

"It was while we was passin' the drug-store," the little girl explained. "Malvina heard the soda-water fizzin' and thought 't was another cat."

But Gerald had brought his yellow rabbit, together with the crowning present of all, — a monster cabbage tied with Myrtie's Sunday hair ribbon.

Weejums was supposed to help Dulcie and Stamper receive the guests; but, instead of being cordial, she flew at "Grandmother," who was the first to arrive, and clawed the spectacles off her nose, making such rude remarks that Eunice was obliged to shut her in the china closet, where she sat and growled through the entire ceremony.

When the wedding procession was ready to start, Mrs. Wood played the Lohengrin March, and the happy couple entered the parlor in their squeaking chariot, which was Kenneth's express cart built up with a starch-box, and covered with white cheese-cloth. A bunch of daisies at each corner completed the solemn effect.

"Now put them on the table, Franklin," Eunice said; "and remember to bob Sam's head at the right time."

"All right," said Franklin.

"E-ow-wow-fftz-fftz!" called Weejums from the china closet.

"I 'm the minister," Eunice said. "Now, Franklin, if you laugh you sha'n't stay."

"Well, I only meant to smile," Franklin explained, "but my face slipped."

The minister unfolded a much-blotted piece of paper, and began to read in important tones:

"Children, cats, etc., we are gathered together to celebrate the wedding of these rabbits, who have got to be married whether they want to or not. Samuel, do you promise to always give Bun Grey the best of the clover, to cherish her from all attacks of rats, and never to bite her tail? (Bob his head, Franklin. No — no! That 's the wrong one; that 's Bun Grey's. Now bob Sam's head. That 's it.)

"Bun Grey, do you promise to take Sam for your maltese husband, to give him the best of the celery, and never to kick him in the stomach? (Bob her head, Franklin; that 's right!)"

A solemn pause, and then in a deeper voice, "Now let the brass ring pass between you."

A curtain ring, wound with white ribbon, was pushed up Bunny Grey's front leg as far as it would go, and then Eunice said, in the deepest voice of all: "I now pronounce you rabbit and wife, and let no dog, mouse, weasel, cat, or guinea-pig ever say it's not so! Now we will have supper."

And the whole company filed out to the woodshed, where an ample repast was set for rabbit and cat. The menu included oatmeal in an ear-of-corn mould, with clover sauce; catnip fritters, with cream; stewed potatoes; and a wedding cake with "B. G. and S." in red letters on the frosting.

The animals were held up to the table with napkins around their necks, and ate their share of the feast, while their owners ate the cake. Then the bride and groom took a wedding trip around the block, drawn in their white chariot, and, contrary to custom again, escorted by all the guests.

"Now we must sit for our picture," Eunice said, as Franklin brought out his camera, and those of the guests who had gone to sleep during the wedding tour were shaken awake again. But it was dreadfully hard to pose them all, so that their clothes and whiskers showed properly, and just at the last minute the picture was spoiled by Grandmother Richmond, who had a fit, and ran up the screen door. There were a few other legs and tails in the picture when it was developed, but it was mostly Grandmother's cap and fit; and it seemed such a pity, because all the other animals had such pleasant expressions, and looked so charming in the clothes they wore.

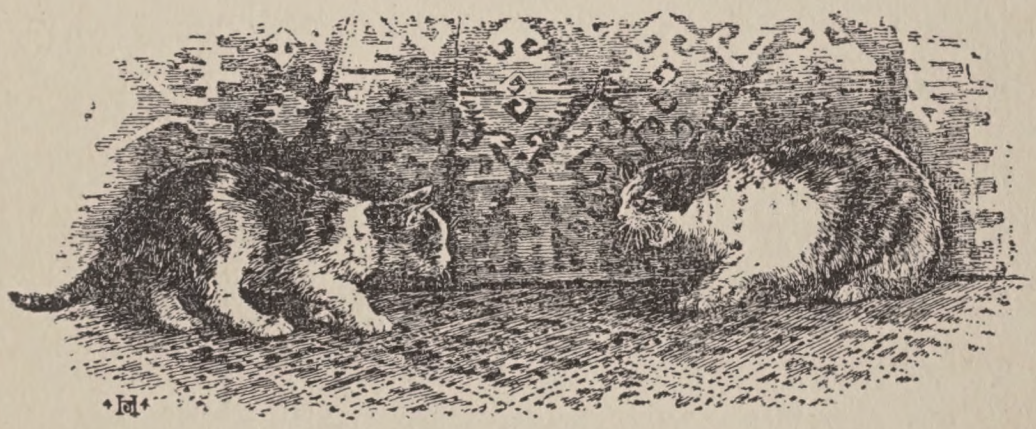
Everybody stayed to supper, and the sliced peaches gave out; but they ended up with canned ones, and nobody seemed to mind.

"It was the nicest party I was ever to," Myrtie Foster told Mrs. Wood when she went home; "and I shall tell Malvina what an awful lot she missed! Our mamma

does n't have time to make parties for us. She has to tend store."

"It was lovely to have you," said Eunice, warmly; "only I 'm sorry Weejums was so rude. She mort'fied me very much."

"Don 't you mind the least bit," said Myrtie, consolingly. "I 've heard that somebody *always* cries at a wedding!"



"WEEJUMS HELPS RECEIVE"

## CHAPTER SIX

### UNCLE CYCLONE

YCLONE was a yellow dog of no breeding, that Franklin had begged from a man in one of the parks.

"He was making horse noises at him," Franklin said indignantly; "and a man who does n't know any better than to make horse noises at a dog, does n't deserve to own one."

So Cyclone became a member of the Wood family, and received his name because of the way that a room looked after he had run through it. He had his peculiarities from the beginning, and one was not to bow to any member of the family that he met on the street. He preferred to take his walks alone, and although Franklin met him in all sorts

of places around town, Cyclone would never recognize him.

Soon after Bridget joined the family, she nearly gave notice because of Cyclone's rude behavior.

"CYCLONE"

"It was comin' out of church, I was," she said; "and there he was waitin' for me on the shteps as gintlemanly as you plaze. And Father Malone, who 'd been so kind as to pass the time of day wid me as I came out, says,

'Shure, Miss Donnahue, is that your little dog?' and sez I, 'Faith he is! Just watch and see how swate he looks at me.' And then if he did n't turn his head away, and pretind he was another dog! The shame of it, mum! And before the praste too! I never lived with folks before to be so treated."

But at home Cyclone was quite a different person. He became tenderly attached to Weejums' kittens, and allowed them to sharpen their claws on his legs.

One day when Mrs. Wood was in the kitchen, she saw Cyclone and two other dogs trot around the house in single file, and enter the woodshed. Cyclone led his guests to the box where the kittens lay heaped in a downy pile, with one little pansy face turned upward, and wagged his tail. Then the two other dogs also wagged their tails, for they saw that it was the thing to do.

"Did you ever see anything so sweet in all your life?" Cyclone asked.

"No, never," they replied, and, turn-

ing around, they all trotted off in solemn style.

"Oh, Mother!" said Eunice, flying into the parlor one day, "Clytie got out of the box, and Cyclone put her back again."

Clytie was the smartest of Weejums' family, and the first to stagger around on the soft little paws that double up so uncomfortably when one tries to hurry! But the others soon followed, and came along behind with high continual mews, and trembling tails held straight up in the air.

Minoose was the black one, and his name was supposed to be the Indian word for "kitty." Fan-baby, the third, was remarkable for not knowing what color she was supposed to be, or how to purr. She never found out the color, and did not learn how to purr until she was nearly three months old; then she began to purr, and purred every minute for two weeks. Strangers passing the house heard her purring on the porch, and the family was often amused by hearing

the purr coming through the halls after dark.

She adapted it to meal-times, and invented a lovely *tremolo* purr for drinking milk, and a fierce *staccato* purr for meat and other chewed things. Finally Mrs. Wood grew so tired of Fan-baby's purr that she gave her away to a nice little girl who owned a pug dog, and it was the sight of this dog that first taught Fan-baby how to stop purring.

Cyclone took great care of the kittens when they were young, and brought them back from all kinds of dangerous places. Minoose would follow strangers down the street, and then forget how to come home; and Clytie would scramble up a tree in the back yard, and not know how to get down. Cyclone would sit under the tree, and bark sympathetically, while Clytie tried first one front paw and then the other, with no success, until Weejums would come to the rescue, and explain that, of course, you have to come down back-to. Cyclone saved Weejums a great deal of trou-

ble in this way, by letting her know when the children needed her.

But when they reached the large-eared stage, and their blue eyes changed to the mature green of older cats, Cyclone's occupation was gone. He looked in vain for a kitten to bring home, and one day, after quite a long search, he found one. It was a maltese kitten, very thin and absurd-looking, and no one knew where it came from.

"Oh, Mother, can't we keep it?" Eunice said in delight. "You know you always said we should have a maltese kitten if anybody gave us one."

"Yes; but this was n't given to us, except by Cyclone. Some little girl has lost her kitten, and is probably crying over it now. You remember the way you felt when Weejums was gone."

"Well, but how 'll we get it back to the little girl? Cyclone won't tell where he found it."

"Perhaps it 'll be advertised," Mrs. Wood said. "We 'll wait a few days and see."

But nobody claimed "Ivanhoe," as Eunice called him, and presently Mrs. Wood discovered why he seemed so destitute of connections.

He had fits.

They were fearful maltese fits, and generally took place while the family was at table, so that they would all have to take up their feet and sit upon them during the rest of the meal. He was not encouraged to appear in the dining-room, but, being a very thin cat, it was easy for him to shoot in between Bridget's feet when she opened the door. Franklin called him the slate pencil, and said that he had but one dimension; and Eunice looked him over very carefully to see if any part of him was missing. But Mrs. Wood explained that Franklin meant only that Ivanhoe was a very long cat, and neither wide nor deep. Even his purr was so long and thin that Franklin said it could have been wound on a spool like thread. There was none of the baritone richness that one heard in Minoose's purr when he was chewing his plush mouse.

Minoose kept this mouse behind the guitar case under the piano, and would scramble half-way up the portieres with it, switching his tail at the same time. But Ivanhoe did not admire him for any of these little-boy attempts to show off. Ivanhoe had manners, and won Weejums' heart because of his gallant ways, and also because his tail was longer than those of her own children.

But Mrs. Wood decided that he should go, as soon as she could find some one who was willing to own him; so one day, after the cabbage-and-lettuce woman had called, Ivanhoe was missing. But much to everybody's surprise, Eunice never even mentioned it, and went around with her usual tranquil expression.

The explanation of this came two days later, when the door-bell rang, and a strange little girl announced proudly: "I 've brought back your kitty. He came to our house. We live out of town."

"Thank you so much, dear," Mrs. Wood said, trying to look pleased. "But how did

you know it was our kitty? Have you seen him here in the yard?"

"Oh, I read the direction on his collar. It was 'most rubbed out, but I read it. I 'm in the second grade." And pulling Ivanhoe's head around until he meekly choked, she exhibited some very fine printing on the frayed orange ribbon that he wore. Mrs. Wood remembered that Ivanhoe had worn this ribbon, and that she had allowed him to keep it, as a kind of trousseau, when he went away. But she did not know that the ribbon said: "Please return to Eunice Wood, 1132 Burnside Ave."

"Thank you very much for your kindness, dear. But would n't you like to keep the kitty yourself? We have several more."

"Oh, so have we! Our old cat 's hid 'em in the barn; but we heard 'em squealin'. I guess they 'll come out soon."

Mrs. Wood sighed, but Ivanhoe had already vanished behind the house, so she allowed the child to depart, with a little cake, and a fresh

piece of that same orange ribbon for her own kitty.

"Eunice, why did you write that address on the collar?" Mrs. Wood asked, when her daughter came in from school with Ivanhoe under one arm.

"Why, you never told me not to," Eunice said. "You know you never told me not to, Mother. I just thought if he happened to run away from whoever you gave him to, he might 's well come back here."

Mrs. Wood's eyes twinkled as they sat down to dinner, but grew grave again as she heard Ivanhoe plunging down the cellar stairs in his most maltese fit of all.

"I suppose he ought to be killed," she thought; "but no cat's fits are worth a child's happiness, and at least, fits are n't contagious.

"Biddy," she said as the door opened, "do you suppose Ivanhoe hurt himself just now? He made such a noise!"

"Shure, mum, he 's all right now again. He run straight into the ice-box while I was

fixin' the melon. I tuk him out meself, and the fit was off him."

The cats all slept in the cellar, which was nicely warmed by the furnace; but the rabbits suffered when the cold weather came, and one morning, after a severe snow-storm, there was nothing to be seen of their house but the cupola. Franklin dug it out with much anxiety, fearing to find them frozen to death. But instead of being dead, they were all piled in one large warm heap on top of each other, like popcorn balls, and seemed more than ready for their breakfast. Mrs. Wood thought it was a wonder that they had lived through the night, and advised Franklin to put them in the cellar while the cold weather lasted.

So it happened that when Bridget did not close the cellar door at night, Cyclone, who slept in the kitchen, would be awakened by strange tweaks and nips at his tail, which called forth yelps of indignation. But not being a hunting dog, he never attempted to

H. C. IRELAND

catch the wicked white heels that went scudding back through the darkness. He had decided that the rabbits were a new kind of kitten, and had a claim on his indulgence as uncle to the Wood family.

One night Mrs. Wood heard a most extraordinary noise in the kitchen, and, creeping down with her candle, interrupted a grand game of tag between all the animals, — dog, cats, and rabbits, — who were chasing each other around the room in a mad circle, accompanied by stamps, spits, and barks. It was so evidently a game, that Mrs. Wood felt sorry to have disturbed them, and sat down to watch the fun. But her candle had broken the spell, and like fairies when the cock crows, they became once more their daytime selves; indeed, most of them looked very much ashamed of having been caught at such antics.

"Perhaps they really are fairies," Mrs. Wood thought, going into the pantry after crackers, "and have taken these disguises just

to play with my children and me. Very likely, if I 'd come down sooner, I might have seen them in their real forms."

When she returned, they all gathered around her, and teased for crackers; while Samuel, the pet of the bunnies, jumped into her lap. But before all the crackers were gone, the candle burned low and went out, and only the faint light of the stove kept her from stepping on any of the little soft paws that followed her to the stairs.

"Fairies, good-night!" she called gently as she left them. But only the friendly whack, whack of Cyclone's tail on the floor answered her from the darkness.

"I think, Biddy," she said the next morning, "that it might be better to keep the kitchen-door closed at night."

Soon after this there was a great thaw, and one morning, when Bridget went down to the ice-box, there were six inches of water in the cellar.

"Oh, the poor animules!" she cried, wring-

ing her hands. And then she laughed so hard that the children came running into the kitchen to see what was the matter.

"Coom down! Coom down!" she called. "All the rabbits do be floatin' 'round on boxes!"

Each rabbit was enthroned, sullen and dignified, on a box of its own; while the cats sat in a disgusted row on top of the coal-bin. It was such a funny sight that the children laughed even louder than Biddy, although they were worried for the safety of their pets.

"How'll we ever get them out?" Eunice asked.

There was a pattering of feet behind them, and Cyclone came down to join the party.

"Here — I know!" said Franklin, seizing him by the collar. "Look, Cyclone! Seek — seek! Go fetch 'em in."

But Cyclone only ran up and down the steps in terrible distress, not having the slightest idea what Franklin wanted.

"Seek — seek," Franklin said again, point-

ing to the rabbits, and, after barking frantically for a minute, Cyclone plunged into the water. He reached the first box, and scrambled up beside Dulcie, who, not appreciating his company in the least, moved over as near as she could to the edge, and bit him on the leg. Cyclone yelped and leaped down again ; while the boat rocked and swayed dangerously from his final kick.

This seemed to give him an idea ; so planting his nose against the box, he pushed it gently towards the stairs, wagging his dripping tail in response to the children's shouts of praise.

" Good old boy, — fetch, fetch ! " Franklin said, as Dulcie was safely landed, and Cyclone struggled back after another.

In ten minutes more he had rescued all the rabbits, and a board was laid across from the stairs to the coal-bin for the cats to descend. They stalked over in haughty silence, one after the other, and ignored the whole proceeding from that time forth. Indeed, Weejums

could never even bear to hear it mentioned; perhaps because she felt that her dignity had been compromised.

But Cyclone breakfasted with the family that morning, and his extra bone was as sweet as his heart was proud.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE FAMILY IN THE PIANO BOX

HEN Franklin went out into the yard on his birthday morning, he stopped and stared very hard at something that had never been there before.

It was a piano box, with an open space fenced off at one side, and a square hole leading into it, and at the end of the box was a real door, high enough for a boy to use.

"Why, where —" Franklin began, and then he heard a shout of laughter from Eunice and Bridget and Kenneth, who were watching him from the shed. Mrs. Wood was there, too, smiling at his astonishment.

"They 're chickens," she explained. "Grandmother thought you did n't spend enough time out of doors."

"When did they come?" Franklin asked.

"Last night. And the house was built yesterday, while you were over at Fred's. That's Grandma's present too."

"Well, I'll be — thunderstruck!" Franklin exclaimed. "Oh, I say, what a bully padlock! Is n't Grandmother a brick? Are they in there now?"

"Go and see," said his mother, handing him the key.

Franklin unlocked the door, with shining eyes and a new feeling of importance. There was money in chickens, everybody said.

A fine young rooster was standing solemnly in his pan of food, surrounded by five admiring wives, who cocked their heads at Franklin as he approached.

"Plymouth Rocks!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Mother, these are first-rate chickens!"

"Let them out!" Mrs. Wood called. "The little door lifts up."

Franklin opened the door, and the fowls strutted out in thoughtful procession, winking

their lemon-colored eyes at the sun. Then the rooster drew a long breath, raised his head to an alarming height, and, after several attempts, indulged in a strange sound which he had evidently planned for a crow. His wives all looked impressed; but Franklin laughed, and Eunice, who came running out in her coat and red "pussy" hood, asked: "Oh, Franklin, is that poor hen sick?" Mrs. Wood and Kenneth came out too, and discussed names for the new arrivals.

"They ought to have colonial titles," Mrs. Wood said; "but I can't think of anything but 'Praise God Barebones,' and that would n't be handy to call one by."

"There was John Alden, Mother," Franklin suggested.

"Why, of course, and Priscilla — and Rose Standish."

"And Columbus!" added Kenneth, with pride.

"They don't all need to be Puritans,"

Franklin said. "I'd rather have some of them more modern. Just see that one there with the extra ruffle on her comb! I'm going to call her Veatra Peck. And the stiff one that does stunts with her toes every time she puts 'em down, — does n't she walk like Miss Hannah Wakefield? I'm going to call her Hannah."

"Hannah Squawk," Eunice said. "That's a pretty name."

"Uncle Edward sent word that he'll pay five cents apiece for eggs when your hens begin laying," Mrs. Wood said. "He always likes a boiled egg for his breakfast, and can never be sure that store eggs are perfectly fresh."

Franklin was delighted, and went up that evening to talk business with Mr. Bates. His uncle said that he knew of still another gentleman who would pay as much for fresh eggs, — indeed, he and this man had become acquainted through sharing a bad egg at a restaurant. They said that nothing made

people such good friends as having a common enemy.

But Franklin's hens did not begin to lay until March, and then they seemed to have no ideas at all about the proper place for eggs. Franklin found them on the hen-house floor, and out in the yard, and very often they were broken. One hen persisted in laying what Eunice called "soft-boiled eggs," — those without a shell, — until Franklin put crushed oyster-shells in her food; and then she laid ordinary Easter eggs like the others.

Somebody gave Eunice a bantam named Flossy, who laid cunning little white eggs like marshmallows, which Eunice had for her breakfast.

Franklin received enough from the sale of the eggs to buy wheat screenings, and other food for his "birds," as he called them; but he made nothing more, and soon began to feel the disadvantage of owning such idiotic pets.

"They never reason about anything," he complained; "and they have n't any sense of

humor. They can't see a joke even when it's on them."

"I don't like 'em," Kenneth said; "they're not warm and cuddly like Weejums, or funny like Cyclone. They're not much different from what they are fricasseed — 'cept for the gravy."

Soon after the hens began to lay, they showed a desire to sit, so Franklin bought a dozen grocery-store eggs for Veatra Peck; but had to move her into the woodshed, because all the other hens tried to sit at the same time in Veatra's box. He felt rather surprised and grieved that Veatra should stop laying while she sat, but said, "I suppose she thinks she laid all those grocery-store eggs, and feels that she's done enough."

He waited until Veatra had sat for a week; then a fit of impatience seized him.

"I don't believe all those eggs are good," he announced at breakfast one day.

"It is n't time for them to be out yet," his mother said.

"Yes, I know; but Veatra ought not to be wasting her strength hatching bad eggs. I'm just going to investigate a little, and see how they're coming on."

"Of course you know that if you do that, it will kill the chickens."

"Not the way I've thought of."

And that day after school the way was carried into effect.

Franklin chipped a little hole in each shell, and pasted court-plaster over the hole in those eggs that contained chickens. The others he threw away, and was quite triumphant to find that there were only seven good eggs out of the dozen.

"You see," he told his mother, "it would have been such a pity for Veatra to sit another whole week on something that was never meant for anything but an omelette!"

Mrs. Wood never expected the chickens to hatch; but they did, every one of them, — this is a true story, — and grew up to be exactly

the kind of chickens that one would expect from grocery-store eggs. They were none of them brothers and sisters, or even distant cousins, and all seemed like dreadfully ordinary fowls. But Franklin enjoyed them all the more, because each one that came out was such a surprise. He rose at five o'clock in the morning when the first was due, and stole downstairs in his nightgown to feel under the hen. She responded with her usual angry squawk, but at the same time he heard a little soft, sweet sound like the note of a bird, and drew forth a mouse-colored ball of down that looked at him confidingly out of round baby eyes.

"Say, you 're the fellow I came to meet!" Franklin said, setting the thing on its tiny feet. And he mixed some corn-meal mush for it, which Veatra ate up immediately. After breakfast there were two more chickens, and before night the whole seven were cuddled under Veatra's wing.

"What 's that on the back of the stove?"

asked Biddy the next morning, as Eunice came into the kitchen.

"Oh, that's my incubator with an egg in it. *I'm* goin' to have some chickens, too."

The incubator was an old candy box, stuffed with cotton and hung on top of the range.

"Whin it hatches, you can have my bist bonnet to raise it in," said Biddy, disrespectfully. But she was never called upon to keep her promise, for the egg baked hard on the next washing day, and Eunice ate it.

Franklin set Hannah on some home-made eggs; but she used to leave them to fly at the cats, and none of them hatched but an egg of Flossy's, which was named "Fairy Lilian." She afterwards grew up to be an enormous white rooster, with shaggy legs, and a great deal of manner.

When the warm weather came, the cats were fed in the yard, and as the chickens were always escaping from their own quarters, there were many pitched battles over the food. The hens stole things from the kittens, and pecked

them cruelly when they tried to interfere. Once Eunice saw John Alden seize a whole mutton-chop bone, and hurry around the house with it, followed by all the cats. It seemed too unfair, and Eunice wrote a note to Franklin that day about it, in school.

DEAR FRANKLIN: —

I *hate* your hens.

Your loving sister EUNICE.

But the next day something happened that cured John Alden forever of imposing upon those weaker than himself. He noticed a strange cat taking dinner with the others, and thought, "Ah, here's the chance for me! The natural shyness of this visitor will prevent him from resenting any intrusion." And, with a haughty stride, he landed in their midst.

The strange cat looked up, planted one paw firmly on the piece of fried potato he was eating, and clawed out one of Johnny's eyes.

The assault was so unexpected that Johnny could only stagger one-sidedly away, and sit

down in the drinking pan to recover his balance. He knew that no hen could ever admire him again, and that the slowest caterpillar would be able to evade his peck. It was terrible.

Fortunately Biddy had seen the attack from the window, and was able to testify that none of the family cats had done it.

"It was a cat with a nose that dishgraced the Hivin he sat under," she said. "But, oh, the shplendid foight in him! He was loike a definder of innocence."

Eunice was sorry for Johnny, but felt that her cats had been avenged, and stole out that evening to make friends with the defender of innocence.

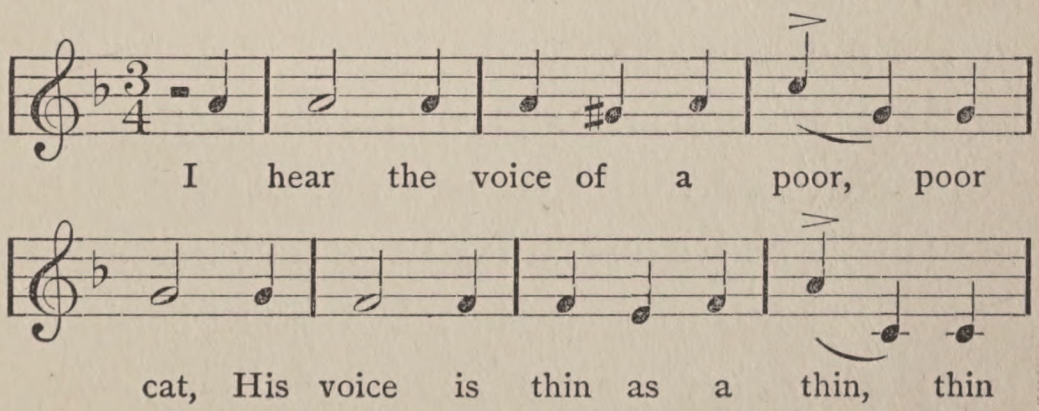
He was skulking under a neighbor's barn, and peered out at her with unfriendly, suspicious eyes set in scratched lids. Eunice had seen "Thomas" cats before, — those with broad bland noses who sit out in front of fish-shops and have self-respect, — but she had never met such a cat as this.

"He does n't seem to like me," she thought,

feeling rather hurt. "Come, poor kitty, kitty, and get some milk!"

But at this point the barn cat screwed up his torn nose with a peculiarly threatening effect, and gave one long slow spit, most terrible to hear and behold. Eunice dropped her saucer of milk and fled. She had not supposed that she would ever live to hear a cat speak to her like that.

He did not call on Weejums after this, excepting at night, when everybody else was in bed; and Eunice wrote a song about him that she and Kenneth used to sing as a duet. Sometimes one took the alto part, and sometimes the other, but in any case the cat always fled. He told Weejums that it was because it made him feel so hollow.



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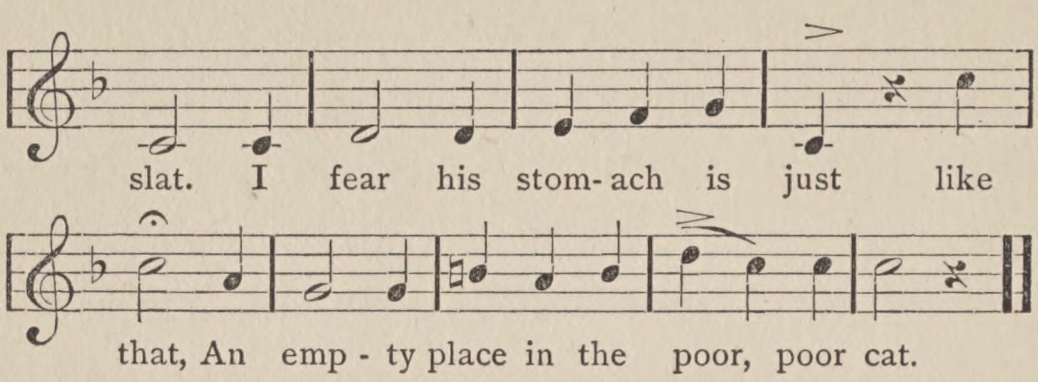


But one night Torn-nose relieved his emptiness by eating one of Veatra Peck's chickens.

"I'll shoot that old barn cat, you see if I don't!" Franklin said furiously. But Mrs. Wood said that it would mean one less chicken for her to chase. To tell the truth, she was getting rather tired of them, for every day, while Franklin was at school, they caused misunderstandings with the neighbors.

"If they'd only wait till he gets home," she said; "but they commit all their worst outrages in the morning."

No sooner would she sit down to her sewing than there would come a polite ring at the door-bell, and a certain Mr. Teechout would say, "Pardon me, madam, but your fowls are trespassing on my strawberry beds."

And Mrs. Wood would apologize, and hasten forth to drive the fowls from their unlawful picnic grounds. But she would scarcely have returned to the sitting-room before there would be a thundering knock at the back door, and she would hear Biddy's voice raised in irate argument with the woman across the alley. "You just tell your missus, if she don't keep them chickens out of my cabbages, I 'll *wring* their necks!"

Then the poor "missus" would have to run out in the hot sun again, and jump cabbages until her unruly brood had been persuaded to return.

"I could n't take but three cabbages in one leap at first," she told Franklin; "but now," she added proudly, "I can do five!"

She knew that her son admired an athletic woman, and talked a great deal among the boys about having the only mother who could drive a nail straight. But when Franklin spoke of wanting a boat at the lake that summer, she said that he could not

possibly afford to have one unless he sold his chickens.

"But, Mother, I'm not going to buy the whole boat! Our share will only come to about thirteen dollars."

"I don't think we ought to afford even half a boat, unless you sell the chickens. Nobody loves them anyhow. It isn't as if they were 'real folks,' like the cats."

Franklin thought it over, and decided that, as he made no money from his hens, it might be as well to get rid of them. It was true, also, as his mother said, that nobody had loved them. But then they were not in the least demonstrative themselves, and did not seem to require affection. Indeed, their reserve amounted almost to coldness when any advances were made. And in addition to this, they had once caused Franklin to appear quite foolish in school.

He had kept a little diary of their doings, labelled "Plymouth Rock Record," and one day it happened to be on his desk when the

principal came by. She picked it up with much pride, thinking that here was a boy who really loved his United States History, and, turning to the first entry, read: "Priscilla laid a hard-boiled egg to-day."

Franklin wondered why it was that she left the room so suddenly, but suspected afterwards that she had been laughing at him.

"There's something silly about hens," he thought. "No matter what they do, if you own them, you get drawn into it."

He also told his mother that they were no good to photograph.

"You mean that they won't pose?" she asked.

"Oh, it isn't that! They'll pose if you tie their legs. But they haven't any front view to their faces, — only a right and wrong side."

A few days later when Mrs. Wood was coming up the street, she saw people stop in front of her house, look down at their feet, and then go off laughing. She hurried home, and

found this sign tacked in the middle of the sidewalk.

FOR SALE!

ONE LARGE, HANDSOME

PLYMOUTH-ROCK ROOSTER,

AND HIS FINE FAMILY OF LAYING HENS.

CHEAP! INQUIRE WITHIN.

*Also one pretty playful kitten — nice pet for ladies and children — thrown in!*

Mrs. Wood took up the notice, and went in to tell Franklin that his cousins, Mary and Wyman Bates, had offered to buy his hens. She had been calling on their mother that afternoon, who said that the family had decided to raise their own fresh eggs, and would be delighted to begin with chickens who were, in a way, related to them.

So the next day Mary and Wyman came down with their man and a cart, and took off most of the hens. John Alden did not go,

because, at the last minute, Franklin decided that he could not part with him, and Wyman himself admitted that he would quite as soon have a rooster with the usual number of eyes.

Eunice's bantam Flossy also remained to keep Johnny company, and as he was very fond of her, he never missed his other wives at all, or if he did, he never mentioned it. And as Johnny had always been such a staid, gentlemanly old bird, Mrs. Wood went to bed that night feeling that all her troubles were over.

But she did not know him.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A LOSS AND SOME GAINS

UNNY GREY had not been well since the time when the water came into the cellar, and she afterwards developed a strange kind of bunny "grip," which made her most melancholy.

Franklin was too much absorbed in the sale of his chickens to pay her much attention, and one morning was startled to find Kenneth tying a black stocking on the cellar door.

"I told you she was worse," Kenneth sniffed, and took Franklin down to see her still form laid out in a grape-basket, with her hind legs tied up with pink ribbon, and her head pillowed in parsley.

"Yes, but I thought she was getting better,"

Franklin said. "She was gaining flesh. Just see how round her stomach is!"

"Yes, but I did that," Kenneth explained. "She was quite thin before I began."

"Began what?" asked Franklin, astonished.

"Blew her up with the bicycle pump. You see she had sniffles, and could n't breathe from the outside, so I thought if she was full enough of air, she could breathe from the inside. You don't s'pose it hurt her, do you?"

Franklin opened his mouth wrathfully, to tell Kenny what a cruel thing he had done; but seeing how anxious the poor little red-eyed face had become, said instead: "Well, I don't believe it did her any *good*, so I would n't try it again, if I were you. But very likely she 'd have died anyway. You see she looks quite pale around the nose."

Eunice and Kenneth had the funeral that afternoon, with Cyclone hitched to the express cart. But it did not end well, because Cyclone got into a fight with another dog, and smashed the cart, and some little street children ran

away with the grape-basket, thinking that Bun Grey's legs were asparagus. So none of the funeral returned but the two chief mourners, who planted some potatoes in the grave that they had dug for Bun Grey.

"You see 't would be such a pity to waste that nice hole," Eunice said. "I 'm glad it was n't Sam."

Kenneth sniffed again, but said nothing, and Franklin admired him so much for the way in which he bore his loss, that the next day he shook some of his hen-money out of the red bank, and went down-town.

"More rabbits, I suppose," Mrs. Wood thought patiently, as she began to wrap up dishes to go to the lake.

But it was not rabbits this time, it was worse; and, as usual, it was something that Mrs. Wood had never dreamed of telling him not to get. Guinea-pigs had been discouraged, so they were not guinea-pigs who greeted Kenneth from behind the wire of their little box at breakfast the next morning. No, they were

much smaller and more slender, particularly as to tail, of which they possessed half a yard apiece. And they were white and pink-eyed, with what Eunice called "whittle-noses," and, in other words, they were rats.

"You see they 'll be so handy to carry around," Franklin said, with a beaming smile. "They 're such small animals."

And Kenneth's joy was enough to make one forget even that they were rats. His grief over Bun Grey faded, in the contemplation of those long pink tails. And when he found that their owners would actually run up his arm to his shoulder, and nip his ear, his delight was complete. It was great fun, too, to watch them scramble up and down inside the wire netting. One caught such strange views of their noses and chins.

"When you look *up* at a rat's chin, it 's weak," Franklin said; "they must have been made to be seen from above."

Weejums left her two new little kittens, Mustard and Elijah, to come and examine the

latest arrivals. They were rats, she decided, — her nose told her that much, — but so pale and peculiar! She wondered if pink eyes would taste any better than black; but several smart cuffs on the ears persuaded her that pink eyes were meant only to look at, so she walked off very stiffly, and sat down "back-to."

School was closed now, and Kenneth played with his new pets nearly all the time. They grew so tame that he could put them down to run on the floor, and catch them again quite easily.

But one day, before the family started for their cottage at the lake, one of the rats disappeared.

"I think he 's got into the wall," Kenneth said; "'cause I heard him scratching round in there when I went to bed. Do you s'pose he 'll starve to death, Mother? There won't be much to eat after we go."

But Mrs. Wood said that she did not think there was any danger of Snowdrop's starving, or even feeling hungry where he had gone, be-

cause, although she never told the children, she knew where that place was.

She and Biddy were sitting up late the night before, finishing the packing, when they heard some one in the kitchen say, "O-ow, yerr-or-wow-wow-O-wow!" and Mrs. Wood recognized the voice of her tortoise-shell grandchild, — the reserved and haughty Weejums. She went out to see what was the matter, and found the cat writhing in what appeared to be agonies of stomach-ache. "So that's where he went!" she said, rubbing the last resting-place of Snowdrop with tender care. Castor-oil and a hot-water bag followed, and the next day Weejums was fit to travel. But as long as she lived, the sight of a white rat was to her, what the memories of watermelon amd strawberries are to certain people after a sea-voyage.

Weejums travelled in a separate basket, with Mustard and Elijah, and as a new home had been found for Minoose, there was only one other basket of cats to go to the lake.

Minoose had gone to the principal of the

children's school, accompanied by his plush mouse, and she had immediately become as foolish over him as any one could have desired. Soon after leaving home he sent a beautiful set of jewelry to Weejums — locket, chain, and earrings — of the kind that comes mounted on a card at the toy-shops, for twenty-five cents. Weejums looked lovely in the locket, but as her ears had never been pierced, she was obliged to use the earrings as tail clasps.

She wore them to the lake, and Clytie and Ivanhoe wore bright worsted collars made on a "knitter," — Ivanhoe's red, and Clytie's light blue. Clytie, being fair, usually wore blue, although pale green was almost equally becoming; and this being a great occasion, Ivanhoe was allowed to wear his toy watch, and the glass lion's-head stickpin that had come in a penny prize package.

Cyclone and the cats always travelled with the family, but John Alden and the rabbits had to go out on the load with the furniture.

"I could n't find a box high enough for Johnny to stand up in," Franklin said, as he brought in his tool chest. "Guess he 'll have to scooch this trip."

But the limberness of Johnny's legs when he was turned loose at the lake showed that the trip had not really injured him. The rabbits also were allowed to run where they pleased, and gave delighted skips and kicks through the fern. Weejums cast one glance at the carpenters who were finishing some repairs in the house, and departed to the woods, where she remained for three days. She had never cared for the society of men, possibly because there were none in the family.

While she was away, Mustard and Elijah learned to eat fish, and spit at her when she returned. They were orange-colored babies, with corn-flower blue eyes, and looked like nice, warm muffins.

Every morning, Eunice and Kenneth fished off the dock, while Franklin pulled around in his half of the boat, and put on airs. He

never went out very far unless some older person was with him, for both Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Lane had suffered so much from anxiety over the boat, that she was named the

"A NICE WARM MUFFIN"

"Worry." But Fred Lane came out from town every night, and he and Franklin took wonderful rows in the sunset, sailing with umbrellas, taking the swells from the steamers, and doing other delightful and dangerous things.

Weejums was dreadfully afraid of the water at first, and would run back and forth in the road, howling, whenever the children went down to the dock. She seemed to think there was small chance of ever seeing them again. But when she found that fish came out of the water, her dislike of it changed to warm affection. She would tease and coax until Eunice went down to catch her a fish, and would begin eating it almost before it was off the hook. The first fish she always finished herself, and the next she took up to the kittens.

Sometimes, when the boat was tied to the dock, she would jump into it, and sit placidly in the stern, enjoying the slight motion made by the ripples, and apparently admiring the view. When the door of the locker was left open, she would creep inside for a nap, and once or twice she went rowing with the boys, before they discovered her presence.

Ivanhoe and Clytie preferred to play on land, and indulged in regular gymnastic feats through the trees and shrubbery. Whenever

Mrs. Wood went anywhere in the evening, they both escorted her, and dashed out from unexpected places with saucy tails, and whiskers stiff with mischief. They liked to tease Cyclone, by making him think that they were weasels and woodchucks, and they frightened people dreadfully who passed the house at night. But the children's interest in them and their antics was soon lost in an event of greater importance.

One evening when Mrs. Wood returned from a day in town, she was met at the train by Eunice and Kenneth, each wearing a look of great excitement, and carrying a little rabbit. She knew that Dulcie had a hidden nest somewhere; but these rabbits were too old to be Dulcie's babies, so she concluded that some one had been sending the children presents.

"Mother!" began Eunice, in breathless tones.

"Oh, Mother!" interrupted Kenneth.

"Mother!" they both said together.

"Yes, dears, they're perfectly lovely. But where did they come from?"

"Mother—" began Eunice again.

"But, Mother—" broke in Kenneth.

"Oh, Mother!" exclaimed both children together, "they're Sam's!"

## CHAPTER NINE

### AT THE LAKE

IT was true that Samuel had taken the family by surprise; but no one thought any the less of him for it, — indeed he now commanded even more admiration than before, although his name was speedily changed to Luella-Marie.

"You see, all the animals behave so differently at the lake from what they do at home," Eunice explained to a visitor, "that it's not at all surprising about Sam."

The three little bunnies were named Vaseline, Oliver Optic, and Sweetest Skipperty. Vaseline was maltese, with the most wonderful soft fur, and soft maltese eyes. Oliver was black and white, and Skipperty a small copy of his mother, as she had been at his age.

Oliver was Kenneth's rabbit, as Eunice had generously given him first choice of the three, and Kenneth took Oliver because he looked the strongest. Franklin had advised him to choose this one, as, being homely, it would be likely to live.

"I wonder what will happen next!" Mrs. Wood thought. "So far, John Alden is the only member of the family who has preserved his usual dignity."

She spoke of him to Mrs. Lane one day, saying, "Do you know our rooster is so good, he has n't made me a bit of trouble since we came out here. He's even stopped crowing in the morning, because he found it annoyed us."

A peculiar expression upon her neighbor's face caused her to ask quickly: "Why, do *you* ever hear him?"

"Well, — yes," admitted Mrs. Lane, with a smile. "He's in the habit of crowing under our windows on the other side of the house, from four to six every morning."

"Good gracious!" Mrs. Wood exclaimed. "Why didn't you mention it before? It would have been so easy to shut him up at night. This is really dreadful!"

"Well, I didn't exactly like to complain. And we generally go to sleep afterwards."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Wood, "Franklin and I will build him a little house this afternoon."

The house was a very simple affair, — only a little pointed coop, like those made for hens with chickens; but it was not so simple to get Johnny into it at night. Franklin would softly approach on his blind side, and put out one hand very softly until it nearly touched him, when the surprised fowl would give a wild skip of terror, and scurry across the yard. Then he would recover his dignity, remark, "And-a-*cut*-cut-cut," flap his wing, wink his eye, and apparently forget the matter.

This would be repeated until Franklin wearied of attacks by stealth, and bore down upon him in open battle, assisted by the whole

family. They would chase him round and round the house, going in different directions to head him off; but when finally cornered, he would duck and hop with great screeches of wrath, and slip from under their very hands.

After a few of these bed-time races, his tail feathers passed away, leaving him a fowl of unclad and forbidding appearance. People passing the house asked, "What kind of a bird is that?" But nobody seemed to know.

"Poor Johnny!" Mrs. Wood said, "why is it, Franklin, that you always catch him by the tail?"

"Why, Mother, you must remember that his tail is the last chance I ever get!"

The kittens liked to chase him in the day-time, so altogether he took plenty of exercise, and, it is to be hoped, rested well at night.

One evening, during the pursuit, he plunged headlong into a neighbor's cesspool, and swam out a smaller bird than when he had entered. But nobody tried to catch him that night, and his crow was so hoarse the next

morning that the Lanes thought he must have taken cold. The experience may have taught him something, for the next time that the family went out to catch him, he was nowhere to be found. And it was not until Franklin happened to fall over the chicken-coop, on his return to the house, that a mottled sob from within revealed Johnny's whereabouts. He had given up the fight, and gone to bed by himself!

Flossy, the bantam, also developed strange ideas in her new surroundings, and persisted in going to roost every night on Mrs. Wood's foot. Her mornings she spent in playing with the rabbits, and laying a great many little white eggs.

Because of her small size, Samuel's baby bunnies took her for one of themselves, and invited her to join in all their games, while Skipperty became her dearest friend, and would dig holes for her with his strong little front paws. She would hunt through one hole carefully for bugs, and then start scratch-

ing in a new place, calling Skipperty, with enticing hen-noises, to come and dig for her. The two wandered all over the cottage together, — sometimes appearing upstairs, where Eunice, kept certain cigar boxes in which she was raising beans and bananas. At least bananas had been planted, but they never came up, and something else was usually planted on top of them. One day it was carrots, and the loveliest little fuzz of green had begun to show above the earth; but that same night it was gone, and Eunice said, "It makes me feel as if I'd pretended the whole thing. Biddy, where do you s'pose it went to?"

"Well, I'm not sayin' where it wint," Biddy replied, "but I'm thinkin' it's loikly to shtay there."

"Kenney, you did n't touch it, did you?"

Kenneth regarded her with a scorn almost too deep for words.

"*I* touch your fool old spinach? You better ask Floss and Skip about it. I saw 'em hopping downstairs this afternoon."

"It was carrots," Eunice explained.

"Well, it ain't *now*," grumbled Kenneth. "You blame me for everything."

When Eunice went out to feed the bunnies, she would call, "Finny-fin, fin, fin, fin, FIN-ny!" (the "rabbit yell"), and then there would come a leaping and jumping of white tails, from every direction. Little ears would stand up suddenly from the grass, like swift-opening flowers, and the ferns would tremble as with the rushing of many winds. John Alden always hurried to the scene, hoping every time that he might pass for a rabbit; but Eunice addressed him with contempt, as "Johnny-that-rooster-hum," and drove him off, heedless of his reproachful squawks.

But Flossy and Skip ate together, for it was quite useless to try and separate them.

"That's a curious friendship," Mrs. Wood said; "I never heard of a case like it before."

"I don't think it's strange at all," Franklin said. "She respects him because he can dig, and he admires her because she can lay eggs.

I 've known lots of fellows who had n't half as much reason for friendship as that."

But the greatest proof of their affection for each other came at the time of the big storm. Storms about Lake Minnetaska are sometimes terribly severe, and one day, when the heat had been intense and the darkening sky took on a green tinge, Mrs. Wood told the children to run for the cyclone cellar. This was a little cave, built under the cottage, where the family could be safe in case the cottage was blown away. In ordinary weather it served as a cool place for the milk.

The children were taught to watch for a funnel-shaped cloud, and a regular cyclone drill was arranged, so that each should do his part, and not be frightened in case the cyclone came. For Mrs. Wood said, "Being ready for an emergency does n't make it come any sooner." And when at last it did come, the family was able to reach the cellar in the very shortest possible time.

Mrs. Wood took the family heirlooms,

Biddy, her best bonnet, and Franklin, the dog; while Eunice and Kenneth had been cautioned not to try and save anything but themselves. Their mother had told them that the cats could stick their claws into trees, or lie down so flat that the storm would not even see them, and the rabbits would run into their holes.

When the storm broke, not a cat was in sight, but the kind-hearted Biddy found Mustard and Elijah sleeping in a box near the back door, and scooped them into her apron as she ran.

It was quite dreadful waiting there in the dark, with the shrieking of the wind above them, and crash after crash coming as things were blown down and swept away. Their cottage was not taken; but another one was, and the roof was ripped off the hotel. The piazza chairs spun by them, and were hurled over the tops of falling trees into a neighboring lot. Johnny's house, with Johnny in it, — he had thought it was night, and gone to bed, — executed a dance before the cellar door, and then

blew into the lake. Kenneth wept, and sat down in a pan of milk. It was terrible.

But Johnny's house was afterwards fished out from under the dock, and Johnny himself was found roosting in a tree near the bank, for his house having no floor, he had been able to grasp this branch with his firm yellow legs, and allow his roof to take a swim without him.

"I think he meant to stay there always," Franklin said, as he climbed the tree and brought him down. "He didn't seem to be making any plans."

Clytie and Ivanhoe turned up towards night, with eyes quite black from excitement, and, strange to say, Ivanhoe never had another fit after that experience. Franklin said, "I suppose the cyclone was so much bigger a fit than he could ever hope to have, that it kind of discouraged him!"

The children nearly stood on their heads trying to see into the rabbit-holes, and, diving into one of them, Franklin pulled out two

struggling balls of fur, that kicked mud in every direction.

"Oh, the dear, dirty things!" said Eunice, embracing Vaseline and Oliver, until her face was well spattered from their indignant heels.

"Stamper's all right," said Franklin, peering into the dark passage; "I saw his nose wiggle. And there's another one in there behind him. I guess it's Dulcie. She'd naturally be with the youngsters."

"Oh, Franklin, let's hunt for Sam and Skip! They must be here, somewhere."

"I couldn't see anything in Sam's hole," Franklin said, going to the other burrow.

"Put your arm in. It can't get any muddier than it is."

Franklin thrust in his arm, and drew it out again with a great start.

"Snakes?" asked Eunice, turning pale.

"I don't know. Something bit me."

"Bit you! Oh, where?"

"I can't find the place," said Franklin, after examining his hand. "The mud's too thick!"

"Then the snake must have bitten mud instead of you. But probably it 'll soak through."

"I 'm not sure 't was a snake, anyhow. There are n't any poisonous snakes around here."

"Poke it," said Eunice. "Here 's a stick. Perhaps it 'll run out." Franklin poked; and from the hole came the outraged, but familiar squawk of Flossy the bantam.

"How in thunder did she get in there!" Franklin exclaimed, hauling her out in spite of her angry pecks. But his question was immediately answered by Skipperty, who followed devotedly in the wake of his friend. Luella-Marie's head followed Skip's tail, and now the whole rabbit family was accounted for.

"I think they 'd have come out before," said Franklin, "if Flossy had n't stopped up the hole."

"Do you suppose Skip took her in there?"

"He must have. She 'd never have thought of it herself."

"Franklin, why do you suppose Weejums does n't come home?"

"Scared of the noise, I guess. She probably heard the storm hammering around, and took it for carpenters!"

"But the noise is all over now."

"Then she 's likely to be home for supper."

But Weejums did not come home for supper, and she did not come home that night.

"Mother," said Franklin, after the younger children were in bed, "the 'Worry' 's gone."

"What, — not sunk, Franklin?"

"No, just gone, — cleared, off the landscape. I 'm afraid she 's stolen. Some one must have taken her right after the storm, when we were all getting our breath back."

"But you 'll be sure to find her, — you and Fred between you. We can advertise."

"Yes, I suppose we can. There are quite a lot of things to do."

But it was not a happy night for any one in the cottage. Eunice was wakeful on

account of Weejums; while Kenneth dreamed of sitting in cold milk-pans, and shivered in his sleep.

Biddy dreamed that her best bonnet had been blown into the lake, with a kitten tied to each string, and woke Mrs. Wood with a whoop. Everybody was glad when morning came. And after breakfast Franklin made a strange discovery.

Two boatmen who knew the boys, stopped to say that they were passing just as the storm broke, and seeing the "Worry" being thrown against the dock, knew that she would be dashed to pieces before the storm was over. So they very courageously ran down and cut her loose, before seeking shelter for themselves. But as she was washed out into the lake, they were much astonished to see a cat creep out of the locker and run around the boat in great distress.

"Weejums, by gracious!" said Franklin. "Say, Fred, did you hear that?"

"I yelled out, 'You'd better go below!'"

said the boatman; "and Joe, he put up his hands like this, and called, 'Reef that tail or you'll capsize!' But we had to run for our lives then, and I could n't see what the cat did next."

"I bet you she's safe," said "Joe," as Eunice hid her face on Franklin's arm. "You won't catch any feline getting her paws wet, when she's got a dry locker to crawl into!"

"The first thing is to find the boat," said Franklin, patting Eunice's curls. "That's a brave girl, Sis, not to cry."

"P'r'aps she's wrecked," said Fred Lane, who could think about such trifles as boats, because he had never known Weejums.

"No, she ain't!" said Franklin, fiercely. "See here, Sis, we'll borrow a horse and ride along the shore to see if she's beached anywhere."

"And we'll tell all the steamboat captains to look out for her," added Joe.

"And me an' Joe'll do a little cruising around, ourselves," said the other boatman.

"Say, you 're mighty good," said Franklin, offering them his hand.

"We 'll never forget what you did for her," said Fred, meaning the boat.

"You will find her, won't you?" said Eunice, meaning the cat.

"And now for our noble steed," said Franklin. "We 'll be lucky if it is n't a goat."

They hunted for some time, but at last succeeded in borrowing an ancient mule, which they both mounted, and set forth on their quest.

"Have you seen a stray boat with a cat in it?" they asked, in agonized tones, of every one whom they met, and could not understand why so many people laughed at the question.

"Was there an owl aboard too?" somebody asked, "and was the boat pea-green?"

But no one had seen or heard anything of the "Worry," and it was not until that night, when the "Belle of Minnetaska" was due with her load of passengers, that Joe, the

boatman, rushed up to the cottage in breathless haste.

"Skinner's steam launch 'Mehitable' just put in next dock. Spoke 'Belle of Minnetaska.' Says picked up boat with cat in it. Boat in tow. Cat in ladies' cabin."

Even as he spoke, the nose of the great steamer rounded the point, and through the opera-glasses they could distinctly see a small, dark speck dancing along in her wake.

"To the wharf, — to the wharf!" shouted Franklin. And Mrs. Wood and Eunice and Kenneth and Biddy all tore down the road to the big hotel dock, just as the "Belle of Minnetaska," with band playing, and flags streaming, came in.

Eunice wished to go aboard at once, but had to wait until the passengers were off; and just as she was beginning to feel that she could not stand it another minute, down the gangplank came the Captain himself, with Weejums in his arms.

"Where's the little girl that's lost her

cat?" he asked. And all the passengers and deck hands crowded around to see Weejums restored to her family. Then "Three cheers for the little girl!" some one called, and the cheers were given with deafening enthusiasm.

"Three cheers for the Captain of the 'Belle of Minnetaska!'" And the Captain had to bow, and take off his hat to every one.

"Three cheers for the cat!" And these were the loudest cheers of all, — so loud, indeed, that Weejums' tail swelled out of all proportion. But nobody saw it, for, before the last cheer was over, Eunice was running swiftly towards home, with the dear lost pussy clasped tight to her little heart.

"The water took the color out of her ribbon," she announced at supper that night; "but she's goin' to have a new one."

## CHAPTER TEN

### ON THE FARM

EEJUMS had not only one new ribbon, but many; for the story of her rescue came out in the papers, and a number of people sent her presents. Gifts arrived also from several of the passengers on the "Belle of Minnetaska" who had made her acquaintance in the ladies' cabin.

There were blue ribbons and pink ribbons and Nile-green ribbons, and one whole bolt of yellow-and-white striped ribbon with little red flowers in the stripes. It sounds dreadful, but was really most artistic; and Weejums had on a large bow of it the day when she met the polecat. No one saw the encounter; but when she came home, the striped ribbon had to be pulled off over her head with a pair

of tongs, while even her own kittens fled at her approach.

"What on earth shall we do with her?"

"WEEJUMS HAD NOT ONLY ONE NEW RIBBON, BUT MANY"

Mrs. Wood said in despair. "She can't come into the house for a month, — for a year!"

"What would you do, if it was me?" asked Eunice, reproachfully.

"If it was you? I'd take you out into the grove, and undress you, and bury your clothes, and wash you in twenty waters with carbolic soap and lavender water, and tie you up in a laundry-bag for a week."

"Well, I can do some of that to Weejums," Eunice replied. "I'll go bury her, right away."

"My dear child, don't you know that it would kill the poor cat?"

"I'm not a baby!" said Eunice, with dignity. And Mrs. Wood went out to see what she was planning to do.

First she dug a Weejums-shaped hole in a sunny spot with the coal-shovel; then pounced upon the unhappy cat, gathering her up in an old flour sack. Weejums was rather pleased than otherwise by the attention, as of late her most friendly advances had been repulsed. But when Eunice laid her in the hole, and covered her very carefully with earth, — all but the head, — her look of rage was something comical. It was not that she

was uncomfortable, but seemed to feel the implied insult, and growled like a little earthquake all the time. Her only comfort was that Tornnose was not there to witness it.

Eunice poured a little earth over her head and forehead without getting it in her eyes, and when she was finally dug out, no one would suspect that she had ever heard of a skunk. But Mustard and Elijah distrusted her for some time.

Grandmother had taken a great fancy to Mustard when she came out on a visit, because he spit at her bare feet the first time that he met them. This was in the middle of the night, when she went down to the kitchen after a drink of water, and Mustard took her feet for white, clipped poodle-dogs, and fought them until they carried Grandmother out of the room before she intended to go.

"I like that cat," she told Eunice the next morning. "You must give him to me, without fail. Bring him up when you and Kenneth come to the farm next month."

"I was going to bring Weejums," Eunice said. "Just for a change of air."

"Well, bring them both then. Any change in Weejums would be desirable."

This was because Weejums had refused to roll in the catnip Grandmother brought her, and had sneered at Clytie and Ivanhoe when they rolled.

"I hope she 'll like the new house," Eunice said.

The family was to move uptown that fall, and Eunice and Kenneth were to go with Grandmother to the farm until things were a little settled. When the day came, they took luncheon with the Bateses, while Weejums chased Mary's cats out of their own kitchen, and ate their chicken bones. Then she cuffed Mustard for not being Elijah, whom she greatly preferred, and Mustard lamented all the way down to the station. People in the street-cars tried to imitate his voice, but failed.

"Now stay here while I see about the trunk," said Grandmother, as they reached the waiting-

room. And the children stood admiring the bunch of bananas that hung over the news-stand, and the oranges piled in an open-work wire dish.

"Would n't it be fun to buy the whole bunch?" whispered Eunice.

"I bet you it costs as much as a dollar," said Kenneth.

"I 'd like to go up and say, 'Just give me a dollar's worth of bananas.'"

"Well, I would n't, I 'd say, 'How much for the bunch?' and he 'd say, 'A dollar,' and I 'd say, 'I 'll take 'em.'"

Just then there came a terrible outcry from the cat-basket; Weejums burst open the cover and, with one parting spit at Mustard, shot through the station door. Eunice dashed after her, and Kenneth made a grab at Mustard, who dived under one of the seats and began dabbing at the swinging legs of a child. The infant did not understand that this was only play and roared with fright; its mother scolded, and just at this moment Grandmother

appeared. "Where's Eunice?" she asked, looking around.

"Weejums!" said Kenneth, pointing to the door.

"What's all this commotion about?"

"Mustard!" answered Kenneth, briefly.

"You stay here till I come back. And take that kitten, or the woman'll throw him at us."

The baby's mother had dragged Mustard out from under the seat through a cloud of peanut-shells, and was holding him at arm's length by the back of the neck. His eyes were closed, his tail curled meekly upward, and his mouth was drawn back in a forced smile. Kenneth stuffed him hastily into the basket, just as Grandmother returned, leading Eunice by the hand.

"No, we can't wait over another train, and there's no time to look anywhere else. I'll telegraph Mrs. Teechout to let us know when Weejums comes home, and Mother will go down and get her."

"But she won't know the w-a-y," said Eunice, her voice vanishing upward in a squeak of misery. "She was lost before, and could n't find the way h-o-me."

"That was because she was young, and did n't know the city. She 'll get back this time, don't you be afraid. Now wait here while I send the telegram."

When they were in the train, Grandmother told Eunice all the stories that she could remember, about cats who had been lost or otherwise disposed of, and who reached home long before the people that disposed of them. And Eunice was so tired that she presently fell asleep on Grandmother's shoulder, and dreamed that some one was saying, in a far-off voice, "Plague take the cat, anyhow, it 's more bother than it 's worth!"

Then she heard the regular click, click of hoofs, like music through her sleep, and opened her eyes on a sweep of golden prairie dipping to meet the sky.

"Most ready for supper?" asked Cousin

David, laughing, as she struggled to sit up in his lap.

"Oh, David, let me drive!" she said, "I did n't know I was here."

Cousin David lived with Grandmother at the farm, and had driven in, twenty miles, to meet them.

"What's the matter with Chucklehead's tail?" asked Grandmother, severely. "It never looked like that before!"

"Just a little baldness, Auntie. You know that tail's seen a heap of service, and he's an old horse."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Grandmother. But Kenneth thought that there were tears in her eyes.

"Can't we ride Ole after supper to-night?" he asked.

"Yes, if Jansen's willing, and you're not too tired."

Ole was the herder's pony, and the children were allowed to ride him evenings, after the cattle had been brought home.

When they reached the farm, the cattle had just gone into the corral, and Jansen, the herder, was holding a nervous young cow by the nose, while somebody tried to milk her.

"Why, that 's my Ellen!" said Grandmother, letting down the bars. "Poor Ellen! let go of her, Jansen, and see if she knows me." She went fearlessly in through the crowd of horns, and made her way to where Ellen stood, spluttering in the herder's grasp. Every eye of every cow was fixed on her as she soothed and petted the excited creature, until Ellen's glance became genial, and she rested her head on Grandmother's shoulder.

"Ellen's kind of a pet with her," David explained to the children. "Aunt Eunice raised her from a calf, and once last summer, when Ellen was sick, and had to be tied in the barn, Auntie used to go out and read to her."

"Stories?" asked both children eagerly.

"Oh, anything! Ellen was n't particular. One day I remember 't was a cook-book."

"What's he been telling you?" said Grand-

mother, laughing, as they went back to the house.

Senator Hicks was waiting for them on the porch, and delighted Eunice by coming to meet her. He was a large, soft pussy with a comfortable stomach, and limp white paws that dangled adorably over one's arm. And he would purr, even when his mouth was pressed against one's ear, — a moist, windy purr, most tickling and sweet.

The other farm cat was named Andrew Banks, Jr., and no one had ever heard him purr. He lived in the barn, and caught immense rats, with his double toes like mittens. But Eunice loved him in spite of his wild ways, and felt sure that his purr, if one could only hear it, would be fully equal to the Senator's.

After supper Jansen saddled Ole, and the children took turns riding him. Ole made no objections, although he had been out all day, but switched his white tail in a thoughtful manner, when Eunice started out, for the third time, down the road.

"I don't need to hurry," she decided, as she saw Kenneth and Grandmother go back to the house. So she cantered on still farther, her little petticoats bouncing up nearly to her ears with each rise of the horse.

It was splendid riding out into the sunset, with no other person or thing in sight, and feeling that she might gallop on forever and ever to countries beyond the clouds.

"There's a red horse in the sky, with a mane like Ole's," she thought. And, indeed Ole's mane was quite crimson in the glow. "I suppose he has a red tail too, if I could just turn round and see it."

Back in the farmhouse Grandmother had begun to watch the road, and when the red light faded, she became uneasy.

"Perhaps she's slipped in some back way, without my seeing her," she thought, and went out to ask the men.

But at the door she met David, looking much disturbed, "Say, Auntie, I hate to tell you," he said; "but the pony's come home,

— without any saddle, and we 're just hitching up to go down and see what 's happened."

Grandmother started off down the road on a run, with Kenneth puffing frantically in her rear.

"Won't you wait for the buggy?" called David through his hands.

"No!" she answered. And Kenneth thought he had never heard her voice sound like that before.

"Oh, my baby, Grandma's baby!" she said once, under her breath, and tears began to mingle with yellow dust on the face of the small toiler behind.

"Kenny, had n't you better go home, dear?" she asked at last, turning to the little companion, whose spirit was willing, although his legs were short.

"No!" he replied, in a voice that was an echo of Grandmother's own. "She may be your granddaughter, but," here he sniffed, and rubbed more dirt into his eyes, "she 's my sister, and don't you forget it!"

"Come!" said Grandmother, holding out

her hand. "I'll help you find your sister. Is n't that a wagon coming down the road? Perhaps the driver will have seen her."

"That is n't a wagon," said Kenneth, after looking at it a minute in silence.

"Yes, it is, boy, — a two-horse wagon. Don't you see how big it is?"

Kenneth looked again, and broke into a joyous shout. "It's Eunice!" he said, and darted off up the road.

"It can't be!" said Grandmother. "No, it is n't — yes — no! Have n't I lived in this atmosphere long enough not to be fooled by it again?"

For it was Eunice, and the reason that Grandmother had taken her for a two-horse wagon was, that she was carrying the saddle, — big, heavy thing though it was, — and the strange effect of the western air had made her into a sort of mirage. As they approached, she suddenly dropped to her natural size, and hurried to meet them, with one long stirrup trailing in the dust.

"I'm so sorry, Grandmother," she said; "but I turned around to look at his tail, and the belt burst."

"The girth, you mean. Then Ole did n't throw you?"

"No, he just swelled and broke the belt, and then the saddle came off."

"And you were n't hurt?"

"Oh, no!" And Eunice laughed. "He looked so s'prised when he saw me sitting in the road, — just as if he did n't know where I came from. I tried to catch him, but he would n't catch. And then he seesawed with all his legs, and started for home."

"You can leave the saddle beside the road, now," said Grandmother. "David will come after it."

After they reached home, she said to David: "I'm really glad that she was n't thrown. I never knew a Wood to be thrown!"

In the excitement of her ride, Eunice had almost forgotten Weejums, but was reminded of her by Mustard, who suffered from shyness

under the cold stare of Senator Hicks, and filled all the night with his corn-colored howls.

"You 'll have to take him to bed with you," said Grandmother. So Eunice and Mustard went to sleep in each other's arms, and shared a common grief.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE SON OF SILVER BELL

IT seemed only a little later when Mustard wakened Eunice by a sudden jump, and she saw three bars of light moving across her wall. The light came from the yard, and the person who carried it must have been going toward the barn.

"Well, I suppose it's morning," she thought. "They always milk early." But when she looked out, the stars were still shining, and there was not a sound to be heard.

"I think I'll go and see where that lantern went to," she thought, and slipping on one of her own shoes, and one of Kenneth's, which were all that she could find in the dark, she crept softly out through the hall to the back door. To her surprise, it was unlocked,

and she picked her way carefully over the lettuce beds, holding up her long night-dress in one hand.

"It 's quite warm out," she observed, from the top of a large red cabbage, which could not have told itself from a green cabbage at this time of night.

Something black sprang past her as she opened the gate, and leaped to the top of a shed, with a great scratching of claws; then she saw two little moons of fire watching her through the darkness.

"I suppose Andrew Banks, Jr., is hoping I 'll take him for a wildcat," she thought, "but I shan't."

Suddenly she tripped and fell headlong over a wagon-tongue, scraping one little knee quite badly. But Eunice had always made it a point not to cry over anything unless it bled, and as it was too dark to see whether this bled or not, of course she could not cry. She went on, and into the cattle-barn, guided by the faint light of the moon, which showed her

the long rows of patient forms, lying in their stalls and chewing the cuds that probably served them as dreams. Some of them knelt, and then struggled to their feet as Eunice approached, tossing their heads in fright.

She went to the stall of Wild-Eyes, the bull, who shook his chains, and pointed his horns at her until she spoke to him, when he thrust out his head, with a long sigh of fragrant breath, to be petted. Grandmother was the only other person who dared to caress Wild-Eyes, for he had not a cordial disposition, and dreadful stories were told of his behavior in the past.

Eunice pushed open the door that led to the horses' stalls, and there, in the great open space of the barn, sat Grandmother on a pile of straw, with the lantern beside her, and the head of a sick horse on her lap.

"Good gracious!" she said, with a jump, as Eunice appeared. "What are you doing out here?"

"I saw the light. Oh, Grandmother, is Chucklehead sick?"

"Colic," said Grandmother, briefly.

"Has he got a hot-water bag?"

"No — one bag would n't go far, when he has several square yards of pain."

"Are you giving him peppermint out of that bottle?"

"Ginger-tea. Just as good."

"Is he getting old, Grandmother? David said so."

"Not a bit too old to enjoy company, and relish his meals. And that 's all that a horse that's worked as well as he has, ought to have asked of him."

"How did you know he was sick?"

"I woke up feeling that something was wrong at the barn. That's happened before."

"And do you always find there is?"

"No, sometimes it 's what I ate for supper. Come, we 'll go back to the house now. He 's feeling better."

She made a pillow for the horse's head in

the straw, covered him with an extra blanket, and took up her lantern.

"How did you find your way out here in the dark?" she asked, as they reached the garden.

"I don't know," Eunice answered. "I'm not afraid of the dark."

"I never knew a Wood to be afraid of the dark," said Grandmother, smiling.

They found Cousin David sitting in the kitchen with Kenneth on his lap.

"Well, here you are at last!" he said. "Kenney's been scared to death about you. Poor little chap, he's been crying!"

"Ain't neither," said Kenneth, kicking his leg.

"Well, let's have some bread and butter," said Grandmother, hanging up the lantern. "David, you get some milk from the pantry, and don't disturb the cream pans."

"Grandma," said Eunice, as they sat eating in the candlelight, "What makes you love Chucklehead more than the other horses? He's the homeliest."

"Oh, that's a long story," said Grandmother, yawning. "I'm going to bed."

"Can't David tell it?" asked Kenneth.

"This is no time of night for stories," said David, taking a drink of milk. "'Specially Injun stories."

"Oh, is it an Indian story?" asked both children in delight.

"Had n't you better wait till morning?" said Grandmother, going to the door. "The trouble with you children is, that you slept all the afternoon."

"Let us sit up fifteen minutes more, please, Grandma!" said Eunice, and Grandmother was too sleepy to refuse.

"Well," began David, in a loud voice, "one reason Aunt Eunice likes Chucklehead, is that he's the good-for-nothingest horse on the farm."

"That's not so!" called Grandmother from the other side of the door, and David laughed.

"No," he continued, as her footsteps died

away, "the real reason she likes Chucklehead, is that he's the son of Silver Bell, the finest horse ever raised in this State."

"Was she pretty?" Eunice asked.

"Pretty? She was a regular Christmas card! and as full of airs as any mistress of the White House. Why, her feet were so little you'd scarcely know she had 'em, and her mane was all crinkly and wavy like a lady's hair."

"What color was she?" asked Kenneth.

"Brown, with a bell-shaped mark of white on her forehead. And spirited? Why, she'd sling Swedes all over the prairie, even when she was an old horse. She didn't take after her son."

"Tell the story about her," said Eunice.

"Well, she belonged to a young woman who came out here with her husband in Injun times, and, as they hadn't many horses, this Silver Bell was a great pet. She'd come when you called her, and kind of snuff round. She was company for the young woman, too, when her

husband was off with the cattle, and there was nobody but her and the baby in the house."

"Go on," said Kenneth. "Did the Indians come?"

"Well, I just guess they did! One day she heard a shot, and saw smoke coming from a ranch four miles away. You know how sound carries in this air, and the smoke looked big, just as Eunice did the other night. So she just grabbed her baby, and put a bridle on Silver Bell, who came right up to the corral. If Silver Bell had n't come when she was called that day —"

"Well?" asked both children, breathlessly.

"Well — we might n't have been telling this story here to-night."

"Oh, go on!" said Kenneth, impatiently. "Did the Injuns catch her?"

"No, but they would have, if it had n't been for Silver Bell. Once, when they were down in a hollow, the girl saw about a dozen Injuns riding towards her as hard as they could go, and she knew if she came out of that hollow

they 'd see her for sure. But if she stayed in the hollow, of course they 'd find her when they got there. So for a moment she could n't decide just what to do."

"Should n't think there was anything," said Kenneth.

"Well, that 's just where you 're wrong. There was Silver Bell. You see she 'd trained Silver Bell to do a lot of little tricks, and one of them was to pretend to be a dead horse; and as there was a real, dead horse a little way down the trail, it gave her an idea. So she made Silver Bell lie down across a little ditch at the bottom of the hollow, and crept in under her, so that she could n't be seen. Then she told her to 'be a dead horse,' and Silver Bell never moved a hair, even when the Injuns almost jumped over her in crossing the ditch."

"Then did n't anybody get scalped?" asked Kenneth, disappointed.

"Yes, lots of people; for this was the beginning of the great massacre at New Ulm. But the young woman got away safe and

sound, and all because of a horse. She often said afterwards that if the baby had cried, or Silver Bell had wiggled so much as an ear, why — the Injuns might have guessed she was n't any dead horse."

"But how does Chucklehead come into the story?"

"Chucklehead was Silver Bell's last colt, and when everybody else laughed at him for being such a funny shape, and wanted him killed, Aunt Eunice kissed his mother on the forehead, and said, 'You saved my baby once, and I 'll save yours!'"

"But it was the other woman's baby that Silver Bell had saved," said Eunice, puzzled.

"No, it was n't, kid. The young woman that the story is about was Grandmother, when she first came out here. And the little baby that she carried in her arms that day was —" David stopped a minute, and his voice grew softer, as he said, "was your own father, children. Now come to bed, for the fifteen minutes is more than up, and I want a nap before milking-time."

He tossed Kenneth on his back, took Eunice in his arms, and tucked them both in their beds, with the caution not to think any more about "Injuns" that night.

Kenneth soon dropped asleep; but Eunice lay awake for some time, wondering how it would have seemed to be alive in Indian times, when red danger might come riding to meet one from over the peaceful prairie. And as she fell asleep, she seemed once more to hear David say, "And the little baby that she carried in her arms that day was — your own father."

When she wakened, a sunbeam was creeping across her quilt, and she heard the shouts of the men at their work. She hurried into her clothes, and went out to breakfast with the back of her frock unfastened, as Kenneth, who usually helped her, was up and away. But Grandmother proved that she could pour coffee, button Eunice's dress, and give orders to the men at one and the same time.

There was a rattle of harness in the yard,

and David put his head in at the door, saying: "There's a fellow just come out from town with a telegram."

"Tell him to unhitch and come in," said Grandmother. "Yes, dear, Kenny's off with Peterson and the Norman colt. Will you have sugar on your mush?"

David came in, followed by the messenger, who said, "Yes, I guessed it might be important, and hustled for all I was worth. I've been on the road since four."

He handed Grandmother the telegram, and she poured out his coffee before opening it.

"Anything serious, Aunt Eunice?" David asked.

"Not serious, but most important," Grandmother said, and, turning to Eunice, she read:

Weejums has arrived. Will take her up to Mrs. Wood to-morrow.

M. Teechout.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### CLYTIE, THE CAT WITH MITTENS

LYTIE was a cat who might certainly be called young for her age. She had frisked through a thoughtless kitten-hood with Ivanhoe, and now spent many hours in playing with Neddy, the white rat, for whom she had conceived an early passion. Neddy's real name was Editor, because he sat up nights; and he differed from other rats in having a sense of humor. Clytie did not know this however; she only thought it must be fine to have pink eyes, and a tail that never swelled, no matter how embarrassed one might be.

Seated on the top of Neddy's house, she would draw her claws across the wire netting, and Neddy would shoot out of his inner oat-meal box, as if cheese itself had called. Up

and down he would chase the wandering paw, until it vanished above his head, and then there would be the large excitement of waiting for it to come again. There was a knot-hole in the top of the box, and one day Clytie's tail slipped down through it. Shortly afterwards the family was summoned by howls of terror, to find Neddy swinging merrily back and forth on his furry chandelier, evidently not connecting it at all in his mind with the owner of the paw.

Clytie gave up playing with Neddy after this, and devoted herself to the general good. Every night Mrs. Wood made a tour of all the bedrooms with a folded newspaper, killing mosquitoes and flies, and after watching her several times Clytie suddenly decided what double toes were meant for. Bang! would go the newspaper on the wall, and, thud! would go the mittened paws beneath it. One fly for the newspaper, and yes — two for the mittened paws! Clytie did not stop to eat the flies, but swept them into a little heap to serve as a

quick lunch later on. Ceiling flies had to be brushed off, of course, but even the most high-roosting flies adorned the heap before the swift paws ceased their work. Clytie had at last become a useful member of the family, and Franklin said that it was because her experience with Neddy had aged her.

When Eunice and Kenneth came back from the farm, they found Weejums and Clytie in full possession of the house, — Weejums with a new family of two, and Clytie with a new air of dignity and cathood. She was a very handsome pussy, yellow and white, with lovely brown eyes and a great deal of fur in her tail. Several people had wanted to buy her; but Eunice always answered: "No, she is Weejums' eldest child, and not for sale."

About a month after Weejums' kittens came, Clytie had some of her own in the barn, and came in to tell the family about it. Eunice met her first, and knew that the proud quiver of her tail could mean but one thing.

"Biddy," she said, "I know they 're there!"

"Well, whin it sthops rainin' we'll go out and see," Biddy replied.

Eunice hovered about the house in a great state of excitement, making guesses as to the number of kittens, and what color they might be. Only two would be kept, she knew; but suppose that there should be one tortoise-shell, and one maltese, and one pure white! — which would she be able to spare?

"Weejums, you're a grandmother! You're a grandmother! *Weejums*, — do you understand?" she whispered. And Weejums looked up with what Eunice called "fumes" over her eyes, and smiled.

"I want to go, too!" Kenneth said, as Eunice and Biddy started for the barn.

"Me too," Mrs. Wood added. So everybody joined the procession, and Clytie led them proudly across the yard to the barn, up the steps to the barn chamber, and over some old mattresses to an empty nest! There was the little bed that Clytie had made for her babies, but not one kitten was to be seen.

"Perhaps they've crawled under the mattress," said Franklin, lifting it up; but there was no sign of a kitten anywhere in the room, and Clytie's surprise was at first greater than her sorrow. Then, "Ow!" she remarked in a melancholy voice, and "Wow!" came in echoing tones from her mother on the stairs. "Yow!" said Clytie again, and "Row!" answered Weejums, sympathetically. "Come, let's hunt for them! *Pur-r? Wur-r?*" So all day long, and all of the next day, the two cats hunted for the missing kittens, calling them high and low. But neither they nor any one else ever discovered what had become of them. Some members of the family thought it was rats, — others that a certain morose neighbor who rented a part of the barn for his horse, objected to having so many cats on the premises. In any case, Weejums' grandchildren never turned up, and after a two-days' search Clytie decided that she must have been mistaken about them, and that Weejums' kittens were hers. So she walked in and took possession, and Weejums,

who had always disliked the confinement of nursing, was very thankful to be rid of them. She resumed her social evenings with the family, attended midnight concerts, and chased boot-buttons around the kitchen floor.

Meanwhile, poor Clytie became pale and wan with anxiety, from trying to make month-old kittens behave as if they were new. Of course they liked to climb out of the box, but, as fast as they reached the floor, she would jump after them, and bring them back. She also carried them all over the house, and they became quite lazy from being carried, so long after their own little legs should have done the work. Their names were Paul Jones and Proserpine, — Paul Jones, black, with white nose, shirt, and slippers; and Proserpine, pure white, except for two inky ears and one black tail, most charming to behold. Proserpine's ears and tail did not show at all after dark, so it looked as if she had none.

Both kittens grew up, thinking that Weejums was their grandmother, and once, when

Torn-nose inquired whose they were, she replied that they belonged to a yellow-and-white cat living in the same house.

"To be sure," Torn-nose said, "I might have known that you could not have kittens of so advanced an age."

But this was only his way, for he knew perfectly well that Clytie was Weejums' daughter, and even paid her compliments when her mother was not looking.

The only times that Weejums showed any interest in her children, was when a dog entered the yard. Then both cats would fly at him, and send him off, ki-yi-ing down the street. They discovered so many new ways of scratching a dog, that it became a kind of fancy-work with them, and all the friends that Cyclone invited to dinner, sent polite but firm regrets.

One day two strange-looking animals trotted down the road, from some distant shanties, and began nosing around the back door after food. Weejums and Clytie decided that they must be dogs, although they were stouter than any

dogs that they had ever chased, and made astonishing remarks, in a language that they failed to understand.

"Ooof — umph," said the spotted one, who had brown, red-rimmed eyes, trimmed with white eyelashes.

"Humph — humph!" replied the white one, who had but one eye, and no eyelashes at all, except along the ridge of his spine. "Wee, wee! Murder! Help! Help!" they both squealed, as two spitting balls of fur shot across the yard, and landed on their backs.

"Hivin save us!" exclaimed Biddy, rushing to the window, as two shrieking pigs, each ridden by an angry cat, dashed past, and out of the yard. The departure of the pigs through a fence on the other side of the street, caused the cats to dismount before they had planned. But Franklin was so proud of this feat, that he went around boasting among his friends, that "his sister had a cat that could lick anything on four legs." So, of course, all

the boys were anxious to prove that his sister had nothing of the kind.

"Bet you it could n't lick Boston's bull-pup," one of them said.

"Bet you it could n't lick my thorough-bred mastiff-poodle," said another.

"Ho!" said Franklin, "Weejums would claw up the pedigree of your dog, so that you 'd have to cart home the mastiff and the poodle part of him, in separate loads."

It was this remark that caused Boston's bull-pup to go in training for action, as it was well known that no cat on whom he was set, ever escaped him, and he had a shameful record of little paws hushed in the beginning of their play, and gentle purrs silenced through murderous intent. For the bull-pup's owner was a cruel boy, and a boy's dog always tries to be like his master.

That fall, Eunice had begun dressing all her cats in little blankets; and this naturally suggested petticoats, and, later on, pantalettes. The pantalettes were cut like cross-sections of

stove-pipe, and were held on the cat's front paws by a little suspender going over her shoulders. Clytie had a charming pair made of white flannel, feather-stitched with light blue silk, and the effect of these, peeping

"THE SASH WAS NOT TOO TIGHT TO ALLOW FOR DINNER"

from under her Mother Hubbard blanket with the *guimpe*, was most unusual. This blanket did not fasten with a buttoned belt underneath, like her plaid gingham ones, for morning, but had two little slits in the side, for a sash to come through, and tie in a huge bow on top. When fully dressed, she looked like a cross between a circus clown and a chrysan-

themum. But of course she could run about perfectly well, and the sash was not too tight to allow for dinner.

Eunice had just finished dressing her one day, when a white dog with an ugly lower jaw, came into the yard. Clytie saw him from the window, and knew from the set of his legs that he meant business. This was no ordinary cur, to be frightened away by a spit, and a stiff whisker; and she was just rejoicing that her mother and kittens were safe in the kitchen, when, oh, horrible! around the corner came Weejums, alone, making straight for the dog, without having stopped to consider his lower jaw.

The dog saw her, and, as a low whistle sounded from somewhere, rushed at her in the deadly silence that is worse than a hundred growls. Franklin also saw her, and rushed out of the house with a hot poker, resolved that if Weejums' time had come, Boston's bull-pup should never live to tell the tale. But he would have been too late if the dog

had not suddenly stopped in his wild charge, and stared in horror at a strange, white object that came tearing around the house, like the enraged ghost of all the cats he had slain, — a fearful ghost in panties and petticoats, and with no head, — for the wind had tossed Clytie's Mother Hubbard skirt over her ears, — and an orange tail, like flame.

Bodily terror could not have alarmed Boston's bull-pup; but this was something unearthly, and beyond his experience. His lower jaw weakened, and, with a yelp of dismay, he turned and bolted from the yard. Franklin followed with the poker, but the bull-pup was already miles away, and for months afterwards he could not be induced to chase another cat. Boston finally sold him in disgust to some one who wanted a tame, gentle dog, and spent the money that he received for him in trying to keep out of Franklin's way.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### TORN-NOSE

THE new house was not far from the Children's Hospital, and a young doctor who often passed that way, became much interested in the attire of Eunice's cats.

"Why does the long, blue one wear tennis trousers?" he asked one day.

This was because Ivanhoe's pantalettes were not ruffled like Weejums', but made of stiff white piqué, with the trimming laid on plain.

"They're more suitable," Eunice replied. And she called his attention to Ivanhoe's blanket, which was made from a gentleman's handkerchief, with a green and red border of horseshoes and little whips.

"You get those down at the 'Teapot' for

six cents, don't you?" said the doctor, nodding intelligently. "The night-watchman has one."

"Yes, they asked me if I wanted a lady's or gentleman's handkerchief, and of course I said a gentleman's. It saves lots of trouble in the hemming, 'cause you only have to cut out the neck."

"I wish you 'd bring some of these fellows up to the hospital, and show the children. Those clothes would please them nearly to death."

"I 'll ask," Eunice said, taking the doctor's hand. "You come and ask, too."

But Mrs. Wood came out on the porch just then, and when the doctor had assured her that there were no "catching" illnesses at the hospital, she said that Eunice might go.

"I 'll take Clytie," Eunice said, "because she 's the handsomest. And she can wear all the clothes."

"All at once?" asked the doctor, astonished.

"Yes, it keeps her from kicking, and it 's the easiest way to carry them."

The little crippled children spent a wonderful hour in seeing Clytie dressed in her various costumes, and there was a great deal of conversation as to which became her most.

"I like her best in the satin ball-blanket, with the make-believe roses," said one.

"No, that ain't no go. She looks a sight han'somer in the caliky pants."

"Does her mittens take off too?" asked a very small voice from a corner, where somebody who had been badly burned was trying not to cry.

"No, those came with her. I'll let you feel 'em," Eunice said, and the soft plush of a white paw was laid in the little hand, while eager fingers solved the puzzling question of a cat with mittens.

"If you ever want to give her away," the matron said, smiling, as Eunice bade her good-bye, "I hope you will let us have the first chance."

"Oh, we shall never give her away!" Eunice said. "You see she has mittens, and we love her next to Weejums."

But this shows just how little one can tell about what may happen, for Clytie did go to the hospital that very spring.

Mrs. Wood decided to leave Alleston, and live East for the next few years, so that Franklin could prepare for college at a certain school that she knew of, and all the children would receive many advantages from being near a great city.

"Don't say New York," Grandmother said, when the plan was being talked over. "New York children have such thin legs!"

"I think we shall settle in one of the Oranges, just out of New York," Mrs. Wood said. "Alec and Maude will look up a cottage for us."

"Your brother will spoil the boys," said Grandmother, disapprovingly; "only," she added, brightening, "I never knew a Wood to be spoiled."

"Will Cyclone go, too, and the rabbits?" asked Kenneth, at his mother's knee.

"No, dear, only Weejums can go with us,

for it 's a long trip, you remember, and there are plenty of rabbits around New York."

"But not Dulcie," said Kenneth, with a quivering lip, "or — Stamper!"

Perhaps the time when one first discovers that pets are only pets, and not real people, as one had supposed, is the saddest moment of one's little life, — especially when it often turns out that the best-loved animal is not at all valuable, and must be left behind.

Many tears were shed by the younger children, and a few in private by Franklin, as the rabbits were made over to "Beansy," and Cyclone was carried off triumphantly by a boy who had long desired him. But Franklin knew that all this meant a turning point in his life, and laid aside the money that he received for his pets to help buy school books, and, as he said, "instruments," for Franklin was going to be a doctor.

Eunice and Kenneth recovered their spirits at the thought of living within a short distance of New York, where there would be matinees,

concerts, and immense toy-shops where one could go in and hear the fur animals squeal, without being expected to buy one. All the wonderful wind-up toys came from New York; it was their home, and the home of Huyler's chocolates, with their many different kinds of linings.

But it was hard to leave Clytie at the hospital, even if everybody was delighted to see her, and the young doctor did show Franklin the operating-room, and ever so many things in bottles.

Clytie's last night at home was quite pathetic, because she thought, up to the last moment, that the family was packing to take her to the lake, and had begun to wash Paul Jones and Proserpine for the journey. They were quite big cats now, but, lacking younger sisters, had to be washed as hard as if they were new.

"I must say I don't care for travel," said Clytie to Torn-nose out on the fence; "Mother does. But I've always been the old-fashioned feline kind of cat that likes a home."

"One sees a great deal of life," said Torn-nose, thoughtfully.

"Yes, but only the worst side. You have told me yourself that those whom you trusted often hurled banana skins at you."

"I 'm sorry you 're going to the lake," said Torn-nose. "Being round with you and Weejums has given me more home comfort than I have known since mother died."

"You ought to give up being a travelling man, and settle down somewhere," said Clytie. "Any one would be proud to own you, and it 's the cat that makes the home."

"I never had a home," said Torn-nose, sadly. "I 'm what is known as a self-made cat."

"Wow, — yow *e-ow*, *pur-r-ow-ow-ow*," called Eunice and Kenneth together from their window, and Clytie heard Mrs. Wood say:

"Children, children, go to bed immediately! Is n't it bad enough to have a cat fight under the window, without your joining in?"

"Imitation is the sincerest flattery," called Torn-nose from the fence, as Clytie vanished

in the darkness; "but how strange that they should have thought we were quarrelling!"

Splash! came a mug of water from Biddy's

TORN-NOSE

window straight into Torn-nose's face, and Clytie heard him plunge, with a great crash, into a cold-frame in the next yard.

"Faith, I aimed at his yow," said Biddy the next morning, "and have rayson to think I hit it."

Biddy was to take Ivanhoe with her, because she feared that no one else would have him, and she had a married sister in the country who had promised to be a mother to him. And Elijah was sent to the farm to comfort Mustard, who had not been able to get along at all with Senator Hicks. But Paul Jones and Proserpine were to remain in the house, as the new tenants had expressed a desire to keep them, and as these tenants were of the kind who know how to arrange a most attractive string and paper for one's tail, the kittens never missed Clytie at all.

Clytie missed them for a time, and then the charm of being an only cat began to grow on her. The doctors petted her; the nurses made her a fine gingham collar of the stuff like their uniforms, to show that she belonged to the hospital staff.

Torn-nose came often to see her, and gave

her some valuable hints about keeping mice out of the basements; it seems that there is a certain way of catching them that saves time and strength, when one has to do it by the quantity.

"Why do you wear that kind of collar?" he asked one night.

"To show that I 'm a hospital cat," Clytie said. "I help care for the sick, like the doctors and nurses, only I do different things."

A few nights after this Clytie was sitting up alone in the hall with the night-watchman, when she heard a mournful cry from outside. It sounded like the voice of Torn-nose, but there was something so sad about it, that she jumped off the watchman's lap, and ran as fast as possible to see what was the matter.

"*Pur-r-e-ow*, Torn-nose, where are you?" she called; but there was no answer, and, after a long search, she found the poor old warrior lying quite helpless on the grass, with a dreadful wound in his side.

"Oh, what has happened!" Clytie cried. "What cruel person has done this?"

Torn-nose tried to speak, but the words died away in his throat, and only a faint purr reached Clytie's ears. But Clytie knew what happened in the hospital, when people lay very still, and did not answer questions — the doctor was sent for; and as she listened, she could hear the step of Dr. Haskell, the young man who had been Eunice's friend, on his night round.

Back she tore to the hospital, and up the steps, just as the doctor came down into the hall.

"Emergency case?" he asked playfully, as Clytie rolled at his feet. "What's the matter with the cat, Michael?"

"Looks as if she wanted you to follow her," said Michael, watching her curiously. "If it was a dog now, I'd say that's what was wanted."

"Well, let's try," said the doctor; and as he started for the door, Clytie bounded on ahead of him, with the most imploring mews.

"Give us the lantern, Michael," said the young man, and he followed Clytie across the lawn, to the place where Torn-nose lay.

"Gunshot wound, eh?" he said, bending over his patient. "Lend a hand here, Michael!" And Torn-nose was carried tenderly into the hall, where his wound was dressed as carefully as if he had been a person, and he was put to bed in the night-watchman's room.

The day after this, Clytie had a little red cross sewed on one side of her collar, and was known ever afterwards as the "First Aid Cat." Torn-nose recovered, and when Dr. Haskell left the hospital, went with him to be his office cat.

"How did you happen to get shot?" Clytie asked him, the day that he was first able to sit up and take nourishment.

"No reason, whatever. I was merely removing a broiled chicken from a kitchen-table, and as I had left another one for the family, they had no cause to complain."

"You will never need to steal chickens any more after this," Clytie said. "Dr. Haskell is a kind man, and will always be your friend."

"A RED CROSS CAT"

This turned out to be true, for the doctor grew fond, as well as proud, of his warlike cat; and as Torn-nose gradually improved in con-

versation and manners, he did his owner great service in the office by entertaining patients while they waited.

But of course all this happened long after the Woods had left town, and Weejums had entered upon the most astonishing of her experiences.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### A VISITING LADY

THE first day on the train Weejums sat up in Eunice's lap like any other traveller, enjoying the view, and spitting at the engines that passed. And when the sleeping-car conductor came along, she was smuggled under the seat in the hopes that he might not guess what that innocent-looking lunch-basket contained. But he did, because while he was examining the tickets, Weejums got out of the basket, and sharpened her claws on his leg. He jumped a little, and said, "I am sorry, madam, but that cat will have to go into the baggage-car to-night. We never allow animals on a sleeper."

"Then I 'll go, too," said Eunice, promptly.

"We don't allow little girls in a baggage-car," he said with a smile.

"But she'll be so afraid," said Eunice, in distress; "she hates men — dearly."

"I think she can defend herself," said the conductor, rubbing his leg. And in spite of all that Eunice could say, he carried Weejums off to the baggage-car, where she was much disappointed at seeing so many locked trunks, when they might so easily have been nice open ones, with pink silk shirt-waists in the top tray for her to lie on.

In the morning Eunice had scarcely finished dressing when the train conductor came along, and before Mrs. Wood could stop her, she had seized him by the coat-tails, asking, "Oh, have you seen my kitty?"

Now the train conductor is a very important person, and as he has the charge of all the cars, and all the passengers that are in them, it was not at all likely that he would know anything about a little girl's kitty. But to Mrs. Wood's surprise, he laughed and said, "Yes, we just

stole some milk for her out of some cans that were put on at the last station. Pretty cat, is n't she?"

"I think that you must have a little girl," said Mrs. Wood, gratefully.

"Two, madam," he answered. "Tickets, please."

After breakfast Weejums was brought back, and spent a happy day with Eunice and another little girl, who was allowed, as a great favor, to help put on the crimson flannel tailor-blanket, stitched with pink, while the other passengers offered compliments and sweet crackers. That night they had to change cars, and this time there was no friendly conductor to steal milk for Weejums, but a savage-eyed expressman, who charged seventy-five cents, and did not seem to love cats. In New York, Mrs. Wood was met by her sister-in-law, who had to follow her into a crowded baggage-room, filled with tumbling trunks and dozens of men, to ask for "A cat, please."

"What will you do next, Amy?" said Aunt

Maude, with a comical look. "I believe that Eunice will be utterly spoiled."

Aunt Maude had no children of her own, but loved the little Woods very dearly, and

"A VISITING LADY"

explained to their mother quite often how they ought to be brought up.

They were to stay a day or two with Mrs. Wood's brother, and then go to a boarding-house in Montrose, to wait until their own

cottage was ready, for Mrs. Wood did not believe in making long visits, with a family of children.

Weejums was more than glad when they left New York, for of course she had not gone to any of the theatre and Eden Musée parties with Uncle Rob, or been invited to have an ice-cream soda. And it was not interesting, either, to walk in a tiny brick yard crowded with clothes-lines, or feel one's way along a fence so narrow that if another cat came along, you either had to back away, or stay and fight it out.

But the boarding-house in Montrose attracted her because it had so large a yard, and she thought it would be pleasant to lie always on red velvet chairs, and walk through swinging bead portieres that tickled one's tail. But this was before she had met Mrs. Winslow.

"I don't care for tortoise-shell cats, — do you?" asked one of the old ladies who did fancy work on the piazza.

"No, Mrs. Winslow is white," said another.

"And a cat that won't purr for strangers, either," added the first old lady, with a reproachful glance at Weejums, who sat "back-to" on the steps.

MRS. WINSLOW

"Mrs. Winslow will purr for any one," said the other.

In addition to this, it turned out that one of Mrs. Winslow's eyes was green and the other blue, while both of Weejums' were hopelessly

alike. It also appeared that Mrs. Winslow had nerves, and could not eat her chop-bone in the dining-room with Weejums' commonplace eyes upon her; so Weejums had to be banished to the kitchen. But she afterwards fought Mrs. Winslow in the pansy bed, and when Mrs. Winslow returned to the house, her blue eye was closed so tight that no one could possibly have guessed it was not green.

"They *say* that 's a bright cat," said Kenneth, scornfully, "but the other day after she 'd eaten a mouse, she went around calling it to come back, just as if 't was a kitten."

"They all sit in a row and admire her, while she scratches her ribbon," said Franklin. "They like to watch the bow go round under her chin, and up behind the other ear."

"Then they say, 'Oh, is n't it cunning!'" said Eunice.

"Children, don't laugh at the people in the house. We 'll see lots of beautiful pussies at the Cat Show to-morrow, so you can afford to stop insulting Mrs. Winslow."

H.C. IRELAND

But that very afternoon came another mortification for Weejums, and a triumph for the enemy.

It happened that Mrs. Wood's room was supposed to be heated in winter from the room below, and one day when the register was taken out to be mended, she had folded a shawl across the hole; because, as the hole looked straight down into the room of the queerest of the old ladies, it would naturally be very hard for Eunice and Kenneth to keep from trying to see what the old lady was doing.

But she had reckoned without Weejums, who thought of course that the nice warm shawl was placed there for her to lie on, and, as Fate would have it, chose a time when the old lady was sitting directly under the hole.

Shrieks of terror from below sent everybody rushing to the old lady's room, and as her door opened, Weejums shot out with a swelling tail, and her enraged victim in pursuit.

"Catch her — catch her!" screamed the old lady, as Weejums bounded through the hall

into the dining-room, and between the feet of a frightened servant, into the kitchen.

"Scat, now — scat!" said the cook, cuffing her off a basket of clean linen into which she had jumped, — without even giving her time to explain that she had stopped there merely to get her breath.

It was against rules for the boarders to come into the kitchen, so Weejums heard the voice of the old lady grow fainter and die away; but she was still angry with the cook for cuffing her, and, spying Mrs. Winslow behind the stove, slapped her soundly on the closed eye. This was too much for Hannah, who loved Mrs. Winslow, and a little dipper of water from the dishpan descended on Weejums' nose. She stopped to hurl an insult at boarding-houses in general, and bolted for the pantry door.

"Come out of there!" called Hannah, angrily, and in her haste to reach the window, Weejums skipped wildly through a pan of cranberry sauce, terrifying the old rooster in the

yard by appearing suddenly before him with red legs. As Weejums had never cared for cranberry sauce, and always refused it on her turkey, it was very trying to have to lap so much of it off her paws, and she had scarcely polished one toe, when for no reason whatever, a boarder upstairs put her head out of the window and called "Scat!" This was entirely uncalled for, as Weejums had done and said nothing; but the lack of sympathy in it disgusted her so much that she slanted back her eyes and ears in the most Chinese of "dignities," and jerking her tail stiffly, walked out of the place.

She did not know, of course, that the boys across the street were getting up a circus, or she would not have ventured into their yard. But they had always seemed like kind boys, so she was not particularly alarmed when one of them pounced on her and, holding her up, called to the others, "Hi, come and see the red-legged cat!"

"Red-legged cat! Red-legged cat!" they

exclaimed in delight, and the biggest one said, "We'll have her for the side-show. Ten pins admission. Make the sign, Bob."

So Weejums was carried into a kind of tent made of sheets, where several freshly washed guinea-pigs were whining in their box, and a goat, with a cocked hat on, bore the label of "Only Genuine Bearded Wanderoo — Fresh from Africa."

"Chain up the Duck-bill Platypus, quick there!" called Bob, as a wretched little street dog jumped and bit vainly at Weejums' tail.

"Now then, big letters —" he ordered, as the boys began to make the sign, "Like this, I'll show you: COME AND SEE THE RED-LEGGED —"

But at this point Weejums escaped from under his arm, and having stopped an instant to claw the "Duck-bill Platypus," departed in great haste from the scene. The boys dropped their sign and followed, but she soon left them behind, and no one who came to the circus ever found out who it was that had red legs.

Weejums visited no more yards after that, but skirted along the edges of lawns, and when any one looked at her, shot up a tree. But as most of the people who appeared to be looking at her were really looking at something else, it is quite likely that she went up more trees than were necessary.

Soon after she had washed off the cranberry sauce, a little girl drove along in a dog-cart with a lady beside her and a groom behind. And this time Weejums did not run up a tree, because the little girl's curls reminded her of Eunice.

"Why, Auntie, it's Octavia!" she said, pulling up her horse; "it's Mrs. Slocum's Octavia! Some one must have stolen her and brought her way out here."

"My dear, are you sure?" asked the lady, as the child scrambled out of the cart.

"Sure? Why every marking is the same! The white nose, orange cape, and bronze lights on the paws. Come, Octavia, come, dear kitty — I'll take you home!"

"I 'm not Octavia," mewed Weejums; "but I 'm tired of boarding-house life, and will be glad to visit with you until my family gets settled."

"See, I believe she knows me!" said the child whom the lady called "Marian." "We 'll take her right in on the train with us, — won't we, Auntie? And won't Mrs. Slocum be pleased?"

"Yes, she was terribly distressed last night," said Marian's aunt. "You know she said that Octavia had never run away before, and was afraid she had been stolen. I suppose she must have escaped from the people who carried her off. Dear me, it's fortunate we found her! And the Cat Show beginning to-morrow!"

"Mrs. Slocum will think it's pretty dreadful that they carried her out of town," said Marian.

"It's natural that they should. She's too valuable to exhibit near home," said the Aunt.

Now Weejums had not listened to any of

this, because she was watching the view from the dog-cart, and wishing that Torn-nose might see her; but when they stopped at a grocer's, and she was bundled into a covered basket, she began to think that something might be wrong. A little later she smelled engine-smoke, and knew by the rattle and noise that they were on the train, going she knew not where.

After this came the jingle of street-cars, and then a long, smooth ride in a queer kind of carriage driven by some one up in the air.

"Number —, Fifth Avenue, Ma'am," called the man over their heads, and Weejums felt herself being carried up steps to a door which opened almost before the bell was rung.

"Oh, Fennels!" said Marian. "Is Mrs. Slocum in? We've found Octavia! Only think!"

"Very good, Miss. But the cat come home last night, Miss. They've been bath-ing her to-day for the show."

"Octavia is back — is here? But she can't

be, Fennels, because I've got her in my basket."

"Beg pardon, Miss Marian, but I don't see how that could be, as I just saw the cat in the hall. But if you and Mrs. Armstrong would come in, Miss, while I speak to Mrs. Slocum."

"Then if Octavia is here," said Marian, in despair, "Auntie, *what* cat is it that we have in the basket?"

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### OCTAVIA

THEY went in, and, uncovering the basket, allowed Weejums to stretch her cramped paws and tail on the most beautiful plush sofa that she had ever seen,—and gaze with interested green eyes on the pictures and statuary around her. There were several long mirrors in the room, and Weejums admired herself in each by turn, until she came to what seemed another, when, greatly to her astonishment, her own reflection slanted back its ears and spit at her.

"What cat is this?" asked a strange voice, and Weejums saw her reflection hastily picked up by a lady in a lace gown, while the reflection continued to spit and growl.

"We thought 't was Octavia," faltered Marian; "but that must be Octavia in your arms, and, oh, I 'm afraid we 've carried off somebody else's cat!"

"She 's the living image of Octavia, if you have," said Mrs. Slocum, kneeling down to examine Weejums. "Where did you find her, Marian?"

And the story of Weejums' discovery was told, while Mrs. Slocum thanked and petted Marian for all the trouble that she had taken.

"It might be Octavia's own kitten," Mrs. Slocum said, "except that Octavia never had one so like herself."

"Your house may be beautiful," said Weejums to Octavia; "but your manners are certainly common," and before any one could interfere, she had dabbed Octavia on the nose, with a most unlady-like spit.

"Fennels — Fennels!" called Mrs. Slocum. "Marian dear, would you mind putting the strange cat in her basket for a minute? That 's right, thank you, dear. Now, if you don't

know whose she is, why not take her back to Montrose and put an advertisement in the paper? Somebody must be feeling terribly at losing her, and I should really like to know where she came from."

"Marian was going to spend the night with me, and go to the Cat Show to-morrow," said Mrs. Armstrong. "I suppose there is no great hurry about returning the cat. It is n't as if 't was a baby."

"Oh, Auntie, I hope no one will answer the advertisement," said Marian, squeezing the basket. "Only think of having an Octavia for my very own!"

"Well, we 'll see you to-morrow," said Mrs. Slocum, as her guests took their leave, and parting spits were exchanged between the two ladies of tortoise-shell complexion.

So it happened that when Mrs. Wood and her children stopped, in utter joy and astonishment, before Octavia's cage at the Cat Show, they received a cordial welcome from two strange ladies and a little girl.

"It's Weejums!" exclaimed Mrs. Wood, and Franklin in the same breath.

"It's Weejums!" said Kenneth. "Somebody stole her and fixed her up for the show!"

"Does n't she look whacking!" said Franklin. "They're not going to keep her, though. Somebody will be arrested for this!"

"It's not, either," said Eunice, struggling to keep back the tears, for at first she too had thought it was. "Don't you see — her expression is entirely different?"

It's a wise child that knows its own cat, and Eunice, the little mother, could not be deceived in her Weejums.

"Have you lost a kitty?" asked Marian, taking Eunice by the hand. "A sweet kitty that looks just like this one? And do you live in Montrose? I think I saw your brother on the street."

"Yes — yes, yes," answered Eunice to each question. "Weejums fell through the floor on to an old lady's head, and —" this was almost too much to recount — "the old lady

chased her out of the house. She did n't come home last night."

"Well, I found her!" said Marian, triumphantly; "so don't feel bad any more. I found her — do you hear? She 's at Auntie's house now, and you can take her right home."

"Would you mind telling me where you got the cat?" asked Mrs. Slocum, politely, of Mrs. Wood.

"In Alleston, where we lived," was the answer. "She came to us in such a strange way —" and she started to tell the story of the Alley Cat, but Mrs. Slocum interrupted her quite excitedly.

"In Alleston, did you say? Why, we have relatives in Alleston, and Octavia has visited there with us, have n't you, pusskins? And she had some kittens there too, but they all died, that is, all except a hideous brindled thing that ran away. We 've always felt ashamed of that kitten."

"Then if Octavia's kitten was brindle, our cat that the little girl found is Octavia's

grandchild," said Mrs. Wood; "we've always felt that Weejums must have good blood, although she is sometimes a little brusque in her manners."

"Can't you all come home to luncheon with me?" asked Mrs. Armstrong, "and see your cat? After all, it may not be the same one. It would be too extraordinary if it was."

"We'll come and see you with pleasure," said Mrs. Wood, thanking her; "but the children were to meet their uncle for luncheon at Dorlon's. He has promised them a lobster, and I'm hoping that this excitement over Weejums will make them forget it."

So after they had admired a few more of the cats, particularly the Angoras, which looked, Kenneth said, "as if their fur needed weeding," the whole party took the Elevated to West 81st Street, and walked over to Mrs. Armstrong's house, opposite the Park, where, in an upper window, lined with Nile-green pillows, a familiar form was balanced upon a pot of white azalea, catching flies.

"It *is!*" cried Eunice, giving Marian a hug. "Yes, it is!"

"Are you sure?" asked Marian, a little disappointed. "I was almost hoping it would n't be, so that I could keep her. She 's so sweet, you know!"

"I know better than any one," said Eunice, seriously. "You see, she 's *my* cat. Of course you would n't exactly understand my feelings about her — if you never had a cat."

Weejums was delighted to see Eunice, but howled wrathfully when, after luncheon, she was thrust into her basket and carried back to the hated boarding-house.

"It won't be for long," Eunice whispered in her ear, as she was banished to the laundry, instead of being allowed to spend the evening in the parlor.

The children pleaded for her, and explained to the old lady that it must have been much more painful for Weejums to fall heavily on a hard bald head, than it was for the head to catch a nice furry Weejums. But when the

old lady took off her cap it really did seem, judging from the appearance of the head, as if Weejums had danced a hornpipe on it before reaching the floor.

"The cat must n't come into the front of the house again," the landlady decided, and was not at all moved when Eunice said pitifully, "It 's an accident that might happen to any one who tried to lie down on a hole."

Both cats slept in the laundry; but, as Weejums was in disgrace, Mrs. Winslow would not speak to her, and, ignoring the other half of their bed, went off and lay down gingerly on some bars of soap.

It was in the middle of the night that Mrs. Winslow waked herself with a great sneeze, and saw Weejums sniffing nervously around a crack in the floor.

"Mice?" asked Mrs. Winslow, quite forgetting that they were not on speaking terms.

"No, smoke," answered Weejums, with contempt. "It is evident that the two sides of

your nose don't match any better than your eyes."

"There should n't be smoke at this time of night," said Mrs. Winslow, uneasily, "should there?"

"No," said Weejums, "there never has been before."

"There's a broken pane of glass in the outside window," said Mrs. Winslow, jumping up. "The smoke is getting so thick we'd better go out in the garden."

"I think we ought to tell somebody about it," said Weejums.

"Why should we?" asked Mrs. Winslow, lazily. "No one else sleeps in the laundry. Besides you could n't get upstairs."

"Yes, I could, through the hole where they pass the dishes in the butler's pantry. Hannah left it open last night."

"If I'd known that," said Mrs. Winslow, crossly, "we could have slept in the parlor to-night. Why did n't you —"

But at that moment a larger puff of smoke

came up through the crack, and Mrs. Winslow made a leap for the window, found the broken pane of glass, and was gone. Weejums ran into the butler's pantry, took a still higher leap to the little window, and in another minute was scratching and mewing at Mrs. Wood's door.

"Be still, Weejums!" she called softly, so as not to wake the children. "Go downstairs, bad cat!"

"Oh, please come!" called Weejums again and again, "please, please come!"

And at last Mrs. Wood went; but before Weejums could guide her to the laundry, she had smelled the smoke, and in a few minutes the household was roused. People bundled out of their beds, and into the street just in time, before the flames came up through the laundry floor, and the engines were in the yard. The fire was soon out, owing, as the firemen said, to its having been discovered so early, and all the boarders gathered around Weejums with embraces and grateful tears.

"It 's bad to have your head clawed," said the queerest of the old ladies, who had left her room attired in a flannel petticoat and a sealskin jacket, "but it 's much worse to be burned alive."

And before Weejums went away, all the old ladies clubbed together, and bought her an uncomfortable silver collar with her name on it, and a jingling padlock that scared the mice.

But something had happened that more than made up to Weejums for having to wear this collar and seem grateful for it.

When the fire was over, Mrs. Winslow was found in the back yard, up a tree!

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### CHRISTMAS EVE

IT was Christmas Eve again, and Mrs. Wood sat alone with Weejums before the fire downstairs. Franklin had stayed up to help fill the stockings; but now he too was gone, and the ticking of the clock sounded very loud.

It was the first Christmas Eve that she had ever spent by herself, and her thoughts went back to the time when the children's father had been with her, and the last few hours of this day were the most beautiful in all the year.

When Grandmother was there, she kept one from thinking too much, although she too may have remembered other Christmases, spent with him who had been the children's father,

and her little boy. But Grandmother was not here to-night, and there was nothing to keep one from thinking — nothing at all.

Down on the rug Weejums was busily washing Octavius, the beautiful kitten who was to

"A CHRISTMAS PRESENT, WITH EUNICE'S LOVE"

go as a Christmas present, with Eunice's love, to Marian Armstrong. Weejums did not know why he was named Octavius, or that it was her own grandparent on whom she had called in New York, and at whom she had spit.

"Weejums!" called Mrs. Wood, softly, "dear little kitty, come and speak to me!"

Weejums rose with an answering purr, and, leaving Octavius asleep in a ring of his own baby tail, leaped upon her lap. It seemed to Mrs. Wood that Weejums' attitude towards the children had changed since she grew older, and her kittens came. At first she had thought Eunice was her mother; but now she realized that Eunice was only a kitten, after all, and that Mrs. Wood was nearer her own age.

They sat watching the fire together until the coals whitened, and the clock slowly struck twelve. Then Mrs. Wood gave a few last touches to the stockings hung in the shadows, and went upstairs. But as she entered her room, there was a sound of soft little paws beside her, and a comforting "Pu-r-r-eow!" in the darkness, for Weejums had left her kitten, and gone with the companion who needed her most.

"She never followed me like this before,"

Mrs. Wood thought. "Is it possible that she knew I was lonely to-night, — that she felt a difference?"

Weejums did not explain what she thought, but when Mrs. Wood was in bed, curled down beside her with a drowsy purr most soothing to hear.

"I 'm glad she 's here," thought Eunice's mother. "I don't feel much like sleep to-night, and it 's nice to have — somebody."

"Purr-pu-r-r," said Weejums, softly. "Purr-r-r-r."

"It was just six years ago to-night —" Mrs. Wood began thinking.

"Pur-r-pu-r-r-r."

Why, how loud that purr was growing! ever so much more like an alarm-clock than a purr, and it ended with a sharp "bu-r-r TING!" Mrs. Wood sat up and rubbed her eyes. Yes, it *was* the alarm clock that she had set last night; Weejums was no longer there, and she heard a joyous shout from Kenneth's room.

"Why, I've been asleep!" she said with a laugh.

The Alley Cat's kitten had done her work; for it was six o'clock, and Christmas morning.

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